

**THE INTEGRAL YOGA
OF
SRI AUROBINDO**

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RISHABHCHAND

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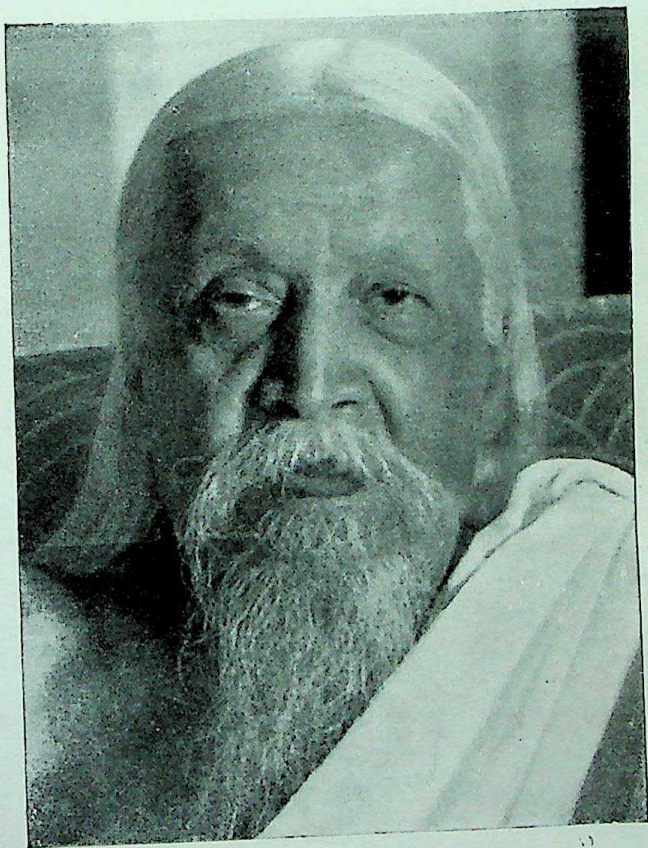
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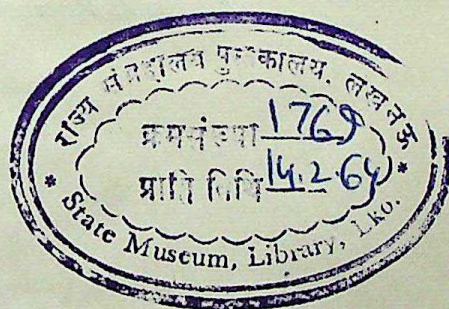
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THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

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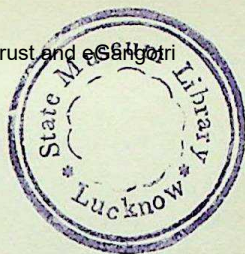


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*At The Feet
of
The Mother*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

A substantial demand for this book from America has made it necessary to bring out a second edition. But as the demand is urgent, there is no time to prepare an index and make certain additions and alterations, which I should have very much liked to do. I have, however, revised the whole book, made some slight changes and corrections, and elaborated the contents. Translations of some sanskrit words and phrases have been appended in the footnotes.

The demand for this book is one of the minor indications of the growing interest the élite of the West are taking in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Integral Yoga and philosophy. It is heartening to find that many eminent thinkers of Europe and America are turning to Sri Aurobindo as the only hope and refuge in the dismal bankruptcy of the modern rationalistic, scientific and technocratic culture, and discovering in his teachings the synthetic spiritual vision, the all-reconciling comprehensive outlook, the happy fusion of the ideals of the East and the West, and, above all, the authentic, divine dynamism, capable of transforming human nature and creating a new world order, which alone can lift mankind from the morass of degeneracy into which it has sunk.

May humanity turn more and more to the delivering Light !

3rd December, 1959

RISHABHCHAND

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

An attempt has been made in this book to present the fundamentals of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo against the background of the spiritual heritage of India and the incipient, but insistent and irresistible urge in humanity towards a harmonious perfection and fulfilment in life.

To any mind, undistracted by the general ferment of the present, it must be apparent that, in spite of all confusion and conflicts, or probably because of them, humanity is slowly, almost imperceptively, moving towards a conquest of the supraphysical and spiritual truths of existence and a new social order of unity and harmony. What is indispensable, in order to accelerate this evolutionary advance and lead it victoriously to its goal, is the spread of a synthetic, spiritual culture, which aims at reconciling Spirit and Matter, Light and Life, and Heaven and Earth by an integration and transformation of all the parts of the being of man, and their perfect attunement to the supreme Divine Will.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo promises to realise this aim in individual and collective humanity. Its method is an integral surrender to the Mother, the Consciousness-Force of the Divine, and the crown of its achievement the

manifestation of God in a transfigured humanity. But because it proceeds in the inscrutable steps of the divine Light, and not by any fixed and rigidly graded way of practice, its processes and stages are characterised by a large flexibility and free variation, which defy all mental formulas and clear-cut systematisation. It works according to the inner needs and potentialities of each individual, and proposes to bring about a full outflowing of his svabhava or essential self-law in his life.

In the first nine chapters of this book, I have dwelt with the bases and preliminaries of the Yoga—the initial way the aspirant has to tread, his personal effort and the intervention of Grace helping each other. An elaborate treatment of the triple aim of this Yoga and its triple foundation, the triple poise of the Mother to whom the aspirant has to surrender, and the nature and dynamic of the integral surrender required will, it is hoped, be found useful. A full chapter has been devoted to the chief obstacle of the spiritual life, the Ego and the desires. Another chapter deals with the soul or the psychic being, which is the mainspring of all spiritual endeavour. Then I have described the two natures, the higher and the lower, and gone into a detailed analysis of the different parts of human nature, and the means prescribed by Sri Aurobindo for their radical purification and transformation. The main difficulties of the practice of this Yoga

Preface

have been thoroughly laid bare, and the besetting snags spotlighted; and it has been shown how they can be most effectively overcome by a constant and conscientious pursuit of the Integral Yoga. The distinctive elements of Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jñanayoga, as woven into the composite texture of the Integral Yoga, and constituting the basis of its synthetic philosophy, have been elaborately explained. The double liberation, the triple transformation, and the fourfold perfection are the special features of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, and I have tried, as best I could within the limited scope of the present book, to give a clear and comprehensive idea of what is meant by them, and how they can be realised in the aspirant's life. Particularly, the three chapters on Liberation, Transformation, and Perfection contain revolutionary departures from the traditional paths of Yoga and the original contribution of Sri Aurobindo to the spiritual achievements of humanity. They are meant to bring into focus the essential elements of the Divine Life which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the ultimate destiny of the evolving being of man.

All these essays appeared serially in the *Mother India*, to the editor of which I am much indebted.

April, 1955

RISHABHCHAND

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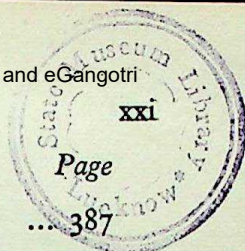
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CHAPTER I

WHAT IS YOGA?

“GREATER than the doers of askesis (tapasya), greater even than the men of knowledge and greater than the men of works is the Yogi. Therefore, O Aujuna, become a Yogi.” (*The Gita*, Chap. 6.46).

Such being the view of the Gita, which is itself a massive teaching of a synthetic Yoga, and a part of the highest canonical triad of ancient Hinduism, it would not be unjustifiable to conclude that Yoga was regarded in ancient India as the very heart of spirituality. The other spiritual ways and methods are but approaches, preparations, subsidiary aids to purification and progress, but the way of Yoga is the royal way, the most rapidly effective and revolutionary means of spiritual realisation. If we study the lives of the greatest mystics, Eastern and Western, we shall see that the most momentous and decisive of their realisations came to them through Yoga, and not through the mere pursuit of any set methodes or routine practices. This does not mean that spiritual exercises and practices are useless; they have their indispensable place and utility in spiritual life, and without them no stable progress can ever be assured; but in order to be able to produce any substantial change in

consciousness and being, they must be incorporated in Yoga and informed with its quickening and sublimating spirit.

What then is Yoga? The etymological sense of the word is union, yoke (Dutch *juk*, German *joch*, Latin *jugum*, Sanskrit *yuj*). It means the linking or union of the human consciousness with something higher, something transcendent, something eternal and divine. In the ignorance of his dividing mind, though not in spiritual fact, man is cut off from his transcendent source and sustenance. He regards himself as a separate being among countless separate beings and things, his life as his own personal concern, his thoughts and ideas as his own mental creation and possession, and his successes and failures as the exclusive outcome of his personal effort. This self-separation of the individual from the unity of the universe and the eternity of the transcendent constitutes his essential ignorance, Adam's fall from Eden; and so long as he persists in this egoistic separation, there can be no recovery by him of his own infinite and immortal Self, his spiritual knowledge and freedom, and the truth and unity of universal existence. His mind may go on developing itself, but unless it extends its frontiers and consciously advances towards the Infinite, it will condemn itself to an endless and fruitless spinning round the desires and wants of the life-soul. A philosophy which is born of the mere intellect is either an abstraction or a specious justification of the socialised instincts and tendencies of the ignorant human nature. In the former case, it is un-

related to life, in the latter, it is an apologist for life, an advocate of what is and has been, rather than a guide to what should be. Its humanism is a squalid worship of the normal and the common, and its pragmatism and realism, wedded to materialistic science, a means of perpetuating the natural, unregenerate humanity of man. Salvation lies in breaking out of this vicious circle by turning the mind inwards and upwards, by an ascent of consciousness towards the Infinite and Eternal, and a transforming descent of the Infinite into the finite. This is Yoga.

Man has first to be conscious of the manifold ignorance in which he lives. It may be, in some cases, a learned or reflective ignorance, full of a smug self-conceit and self-satisfaction, but it is ignorance none the less, which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is sevenfold in its nature, and keeps the consciousness of man utterly wrapped in itself.

“We are ignorant of the Absolute which is the source of all being and becoming; we take partial facts of being, temporal relations of the becoming for the whole truth of existence,—this is the first, the original ignorance. We are ignorant of the spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable Self; we take the constant mobility and mutation of the cosmic becoming in Time and Space for the whole truth of existence,—that is the second, the cosmic ignorance. We are ignorant of our universal self; the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our infinite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited

egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self,—that is the third, the egoistic ignorance. We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time; we take this little life in a small span of Time, in a petty field of Space, for our beginning, our middle and our end,—that is the fourth, the temporal ignorance. Even within this brief temporal becoming, we are ignorant of our large and complex being, of that in us which is superconscient, subconscient, intraconscient, circumconscient to our surface becoming; we take that surface becoming with its small selection of overtly mentalised experiences for our whole existence,—that is the fifth, the psychological ignorance. We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming; we take the mind or life or body or any two of these or all three for our true principle or the whole account of what we are, losing sight of that which constitutes them and determines by its occult presence and is meant to determine sovereignly by its emergence their operations—this is the sixth, the constitutional ignorance. As a result of all these ignorances, we miss the true knowledge, government and enjoyment of our life in the world; we are ignorant in our thought, will, sensations, actions, return wrong or imperfect responses at every point to the questionings of the world, wander in a maze of errors and desires, strivings and failures, pain and pleasure, sin and stumbling, follow a crooked road, grope blindly for a changing goal,—that is the seventh, the practical ignorance.”¹

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

This colossal and multiform ignorance is due to the alienation of the human consciousness from the infinite and universal consciousness; it can be abolished only by healing the division. And Yoga is the only means, the only effective spiritual dynamism that can completely heal this division. Here Yoga means not the union, which is the goal, but the process or method by which the union is achieved. This is the second meaning of the word. The ethical rules and austerities, metaphysical speculation and cogitation, even religious cults and creeds have nothing to do with Yoga—they rotate within the confines of the mental consciousness; but Yoga is a movement of the human consciousness to contact the Infinite by self-transcendence; it is a direct leap or a headlong plunge into the Eternal. Even its start is characterised by an aspiration for such a leap or plunge; its motive force is a hunger for the Absolute. So long as there is a complacency in the mind with its thoughts and ideas and principles, and a contented confidence in the will to realise them, there can be no aspiration for Yoga; and all one's spiritual or religious life may consist only in ethical efforts or ceremonial observances to purify and refine some surface strands of one's nature. Yoga—all true Yoga of whatever denomination—is revolutionary spirituality, it is a breaking out of the prison of the mind, or the eddy of the life-force, or the rigidity of the physical formula, and a passionate winging up towards the heights and widenesses of Spirit. Mysticism is its very soul, and a supra-rational *élan* of the inmost being is its irresistible drive. It is one of the

most daring adventures of human consciousness, fraught with dangers and difficulties, liable to be misled by false glimmers, and stranded or shipwrecked on the shoals of egoistic enjoyments. And yet it is an adventure which every human being has to launch upon in one life or another, because that is the only way to the inevitable self-transcendence and divine fulfilment, which is his destiny. What dangers does he not brave, what risks does he not manfully take in the adventures of his material life! How many lives have not been sacrificed in the expeditions and explorations undertaken from age to age! Failures after failures have been accepted on the way to a cherished goal; dire threats and temptations, severe privations and difficulties have been resolutely passed through, and yet the adventurous spirit of man has known no defeat or discouragement! It has embraced martyrdom and suffering in the service of science and the general advancement of its intellectual and material aims. If that is the price willingly paid for the accomplishment of passing terrestrial purposes, is it any wonder that the élite of humanity, those who are spiritually evolved, have, in all ages and climes, staked their all on the discovery of the truth of their existence and the indestructible essence of their being? Is it any wonder that they strove and struggled and suffered, denying themselves all respite and relaxation, for the realisation of the Infinite and Eternal? Is it any wonder that, feeling asphixiated in the dim cave of the mind, and tormented by the ceaseless goad of desires, they panted for a glimpse of the Light and a breath of the inner

freedom? "...If the Divine has any value, is it not worth some trouble and time and labour to follow after Him, and must we insist on having Him without any training or sacrifice or suffering or trouble? It is surely irrational to make a demand of such a nature."¹

But there are Yogas and Yogas. There are spurious Yogas as there are genuine ones. There are partial and limited, as there are comprehensive and integral ones. But a genuine thing does not become suspect because it is counterfeited. What branch of knowledge is there, what object of man's quest but is shadowed by shams and sought to be foiled by fakes? The seeker of Truth, if he has an inner perception of it and a faith in its existence, can never be daunted or discouraged by fakes and impostures; he proceeds straight to his goal through any distractions and difficulties he may meet on the way. Impostures are there only to deflect the weak in faith; they generate doubt and diffidence in them, cloud and bewilder their intelligence, and unnerve their will to achieve; but those who are strong in faith know that every genuine thing has a corresponding counterfeit, whose function is only to prove the worth of its contrary. Besides, all sorts of unusual feats and practices are often lumped together under the omnibus term, Yoga. From necromancy to levitation, from acid-swallowing to fire-walking, any extraordinary display of occult or magical powers is allowed to impress the mind and confuse its perception

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo.*

of spiritual values. Yoga, as I have said above, is a contact or union with the Infinite and Eternal, and not with any merely supraphysical beings and forces. It is a direct movement of the consciousness and being of man through a series of self-purifications and self-enlargements towards the Truth of existence and its unconditioned peace and bliss. It is a surpassing of the ego, a conquest of desires, and a release from the hold of blinding passions. It is, at its best, a complete and irrevocable reversal of consciousness, a putting on of the immortality of Spirit and a shuffling off of the normal, tattered mask of humanity. Yoga is the only means by which man can become divine, and his life of stress and cares a pulse and pæan of light.

But there are varieties of genuine Yoga, each having its own particular method and particular result. Though each aims at the Infinite and Eternal, the starting point, approach and contact of each are different. Most of them use one part of the being of man as a lever, and lead his consciousness through it to the Infinite. Some attempt a greater sweep and a wider approach, working through the complex elements of human nature, loosening many a knot, straightening out many a twist, and releasing into expression something of the splendour of the Infinite upon earth. I propose to deal with this subject of the varieties of Yoga in the next chapter. Here I shall confine myself to considering the inevitable—and, I could have also said, imperative—necessity of Yoga for a radical change of human consciousness, without which the pre-

sent human culture and civilisation, weighted down with material pre-occupations and blinded by animal passions, will precipitate itself into disintegration and cease to exist before long. In his evolution man has arrived at a stage when his nature must either consent to be converted into the Supernature or go slithering down into perdition.

If we look with a searching and dispassionate eye into the heart of Nature's universal working in the material world, we perceive that all life is Yoga—a slowly, spirally, precariously evolving stupendous Yoga of Nature aiming at a progressive reproduction and revelation of the divine Image in her own terms. From the incipient surge of energy which sprinkles the spaces with suns and stars, and the emergent life-sparkle which makes the earth smile with verdure, and the mobile wonder and variety of animal creation with its developing gamut of sensibilities and range of expressive faculties and organs, to the phenomenal growth of reason and imagination and intuition in man, his fine, symmetrical body, his rich heart of feelings and emotions, his intrepid, adventurous spirit, his powers of foresight and invention, and, above all, his divination of the Godhead in himself, and his persistent, though vaguely felt and very imperfectly realised aspiration for its infinity and immortality, purity and freedom and blissful harmony, is nothing but a mounting travail, a purposive endeavour, a long and labouring Yoga of Nature for the unveiled manifestation of the One whom she holds secret in herself, and a conscious, constant, and dynamic union with Him in her terrestrial play. Nature

is not inconscient and blind, nor her universal strivings a senseless gamble of caprice and chance, and a purposeless expenditure of force—she is big with God.

“But what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by a rapid revolution. It works by a quickening of all her energies, a sublimation of all her faculties. While she develops the spiritual life with difficulty and has constantly to fall back from it for the sake of her lower realisations, the sublimated force, the concentrated method of Yoga can attain directly and carry with it the perfection of the mind and even, if she will, the perfection of the body. Nature seeks the Divine in her own symbols; Yoga goes beyond Nature to the Lord of Nature, beyond universe to the Transcendent, and can return with the transcendent light and power, with the fiat of the Omnipotent.”¹

Yoga could also be said to be at once the way and the ultimate goal of evolutionary Nature; but in the ignorance through which Nature passes in order to reach the perfect Yoga or union with the Divine in the infinity of His Knowledge, she forgets in her creatures, though not in the still depths of her being, this primal and determining truth of her existence and evolution in the material world: the developing ego acts as a veil between her and her Lord. In man the ego erects a thick wall between the individual and the universal, with the result that the

¹ Sri Aurobindo

individual is aware of himself as only a finite, mortal being engaged in an unequal struggle with the immense, unpredictable forces that assail him from many invisible sources. But, paradoxical as it may seem, the very ego which accentuates division and discord, chooses, after its development is complete, to break down the wall and seek by its willed self-extinction the expansion and fulfilment of the real spiritual individual. Nature then begins to yearn in the individual for a conscious and constant Yoga with her eternal Lord and Lover. What was a slow and subconscious Yoga carried on behind the veil, with many recoils and detours, becomes now a swift-moving contingent of concentrated forces marching forward to the conquest of Reality. The conscious co-operation of the wakened and aspiring individual will with the Divine Will accelerates the pace of evolution and compresses the work of many centuries into a single life or even into a few compact but vibrant years. This is the inestimable advantage of Yoga—it is a quickening and revolutionary force, seconded, fortified and sped up by higher spiritual forces, to achieve its crowning end. Yoga breaks away from the tardy process of Nature and, stringing up all the energies of the individual being and firing his central will, sweeps him on to the inevitable fulfilment of his life—the freedom and immortality of the Eternal and Infinite.

The times are full of the promise of a generalisation of Yoga in humanity. On the one hand, degeneracy has progressed far in human nature; the noble ideals, the

higher spiritual values of human life have receded into the background, leaving only the animal appetites to rage and riot on the surface. On the other hand, there is a seeking, an aspiration, hardly definite yet, faint and flickering in the gusty darkness, but persistent and steadily insistent, for a thorough overhauling, a radical change of the ends and endeavours of life. There is, therefore, a crucial conflict of possibilities between two contrary eventualities. Religion, ethics, social and political creeds, literature and arts, science and its materialistic ideologies have all failed to arrest the general decay and degradation; man is being fast drained of his humanity. And yet divinity is undeniably awaking deep down in him, and the first glints of light are filtering into his darkness. Will not a heavenly spring blossom out of this bleak and blighting winter? What alchemy, what power of God can produce this miracle? There is only one alchemy, one irresistible power—it is Yoga. If the extinction of the human race is to be avoided, an ascent to a higher consciousness and a divine conversion and transfiguration of the whole being of man by the power of the Divine is the only means. A desperate and pervasive degeneracy calls for a radical and revolutionary redemption—and that can only be Yoga.

“All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No Yoga can be successfully undertaken and

followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence....And since Yoga is in its essence a turning away from the ordinary material and animal life led by most men or from the more mental but still limited way of living followed by the few to a greater spiritual life, to the way divine, every part of our energies that is given to the lower existence in the spirit of that existence is a contradiction of our aim and our self-dedication. On the other hand, every energy or activity that we can convert from its allegiance to the lower and dedicate to the service of the higher is so much gained on our road, so much taken from the powers that oppose our progress. It is the difficulty of this wholesale conversion that is the source of all the stumblings in the path of Yoga. For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self are full of habits and of influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth and work against the whole-heartedness of our endeavour. In a certain sense we are nothing but a complex mass of mental, nervous and physical habits held together by a few ruling ideas, desires and associations,—an amalgam of many small self-repeating forces with a few major vibrations. What we propose in our Yoga is nothing less than to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary material and mental man, and to create a new centre of vision and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature.”¹

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga or On Yoga-I* by Sri Aurobindo.

This, then, is the nature of Yoga whose generalisation in humanity appears to be the next evolutionary *saltus*; for, evolution is cyclic and not rectilinear, and the emergence of a new dawn out of the darkness of a passing night is not a freak, but the ineluctable law of Nature. A materialistic humanity, withered and warped by unbelief, and buried in the litter of its transitory gains, shall rise and turn at last to the pursuit of Yoga for the recovery of its divine heritage, and the refounding of its life on earth upon the dynamic unity and harmony of the all-pervading Spirit.

CHAPTER II

THE VARIETIES OF YOGA

BEFORE we enter upon a detailed consideration of the nature, process and aim of the Integral Yoga as evolved by Sri Aurobindo, let us take a bird's eye view of the general Yogic background in India against which this new, dynamic synthesis of spiritual culture rises in massive grandeur, embodying the essentials of the past, and claiming to fulfil the more complex and manifold aspirations of the present.

Man is a progressive being. He emerges from the past only to march towards the future, which is an ever-extending line of light leading him to greater and greater conquests. His greatest achievements of yesterday are but stepping stones to the yet greater achievements of tomorrow. His loyalty to the past must not, therefore, be a conservative clinging to the dead shells, but an enlightened assimilation and utilisation of the ever-living spirit of what has contributed to the present, and perfectly compatible with a large and perceptive opening to the future. The revolutions that take place in the world are Nature's violent pointers to the truth that in the onward progress of life there can be no complacent abiding in the effete forms of the past: evolution is a perpetual call to the new and the unknown. Conserving the essential gains of the

past and consolidating and harmonising them in the present, man must advance towards the higher gains and greater victories of the future.

In India, where spirituality has been the very life-breath of the people, many forms of spiritual culture, many Yogas, have been propounded and practised since the dim ages of pre-history. Human nature has been systematically and vigorously explored to discover what it is made of, how many chambers it contains, what is the purpose of its creation and action, and what avenues it affords to the Infinite which sustains and surrounds and surpasses it. Its individual idiosyncrasies have been studied with as much thoroughness as its collective traits, and their origins below the threshold of the surface consciousness have been investigated with a marvellous penetration and precision. Life, it has been held, cannot be rightly lived if its source is not discovered and its sense and significance are not properly grasped in the light of true knowledge. The Indian mind could not remain satisfied with the ordinary material interests of human life; it had an inborn intuition, a persistent divination of the Infinite and Eternal, stretching below it, behind it and above it; and this intuition impelled it to go behind and above the frontal appearances of things, and surprise the secrets of the supraphysical and the spiritual existence. It came in contact with truths, principles and realities which, because they obtain in worlds of other dimensions than those accessible to our physical consciousness, are sealed to our normal experience and, therefore, readily regarded

as non-existent. It discovered that the supraphysical is the parent of the physical, the invisible the shaper of the visible, the subtle at once the womb and core of the gross. It went beyond the mere supraphysical to the spiritual, and beyond even the spiritual to the Ineffable and Inconceivable, in its giant hunger for the ultimate truth of existence. This scrupulous, super-scientific exploration of the hidden, boundless expanses of the human consciousness and the untold possibilities of the human being yielded a wealth of knowledge which is enshrined in the philosophies of India; and practical means and methods by which this exploration was conducted and carried to its consummation crystallised themselves into different schools of Yoga.

It would be fatuous to imagine that this spiritual hunger is peculiar to the Indian mind and this exploration of the recondite reaches of the human being a monopoly of the Indian Yogas. The vanguard of Spirit, the enamoured of the Infinite have been born in all countries and in all times. What is peculiar to India is not the hunger, but the generalisation of the hunger. Spirituality has not been in India, as in many another country, an exceptional pursuit or a hothouse growth, but a universal, national preoccupation. Mystics and saints have been born in all countries, but nowhere, as in India, has the ideal of the saint, the illumined God-drunk man, exerted such a permanent and powerful influence upon the generality of men. Nowhere has the call of the Infinite been responded to with such a resounding chorus of

fervid assent. It is true that some forms of spiritual culture were prevalent in the West in the times of Pythagoras and Plato, and that Plotinus and some of the Gnostics and Stoics were regular Yogis, as also some of the Neo-Platonists and Essenes. Among the mediaeval mystics of Europe and the Manicheans of Persia, there was a systematic culture of some forms of spiritual self-discipline. But nowhere, as in India, has there been such a wide and varied spread of spiritual culture, such a passionate approach to the Eternal from every part of human nature, and such an abundant harvest of experiences reduced to a rich diversity of mystical sciences, each representing a special approach and a special result, though all having a general community in their ultimate realisations.

But the natural nostalgia of the finite for the Infinite, of life for its fount of Light, of the soul of man for the supreme Oversoul, has been usually characterised by a certain excess of stress and tension. The ancient Vedic balance between Spirit and Matter was soon lost in the subsequent ages, and a cleft was made between Purusha and Prakriti. The transcendence of the Brahman became the exclusive aim of all, or almost all, spiritual seeking, and the intention of the Transcendent in its own immanence in the world was more or less completely ignored. Therefore, we meet with two divergent lines of Yoga in India—one inclusive and comprehensive, embracing Light and

¹ Self and Nature.

linking it to life, and aiming at a marriage of Heaven and Earth and the manifestation of Spirit in Matter; and the other, intense and exclusive, renouncing life in its intolerant thirst for the Light, and creating a permanent divorce between Purusha and Prakriti, Spirit and Matter, the One and the Many. The Vedic Yoga, grown obsolete and somewhat obscure, survives in some of its lingering vestiges only in some forms of Paurânic Bhakti Yoga and Tantra, it is the Sâṅkhya that holds the field; and it is no exaggeration to say that most of the post-Upanishadic Yogas in India have more or less been imbued with the spirit of Sâṅkhya. Even Jñānayoga, which does not subscribe to the pluralism of the Sâṅkhya, accepts its fundamental dichotomy, and tends towards the silent immobility of the Purusha or Brahman. Even Bhaktiyoga and Tantra envisage as their ultimate goal a supracosmic consummation and not the divine union and manifestation in life and on this earth, which the Vedic Yoga seems to have sought to achieve. We shall see in our cursory review of some of the principal Yogas of India how the large unitary end of the Vedic discipline has been overlooked or ignored in most of them; and in my subsequent exposition of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, I shall try to show how the ancient ideal has now been revived, incorporated, enlarged, and made the lever of a crucial ascent of man to the supramental or gnostic consciousness.

HATHAYOGA

Hathayoga is founded on the truth that the human body is not "a mass of living matter, but a mystic bridge between the spiritual and the physical being"¹. It houses powers and energies which, once properly quickened and marshalled, can achieve the release of the human mind and the soul from the cramping hold of Matter. The very body, which is the cause of man's bondage to ignorance and suffering and all sorts of obscurations, can be made, if rightly tackled and trained, a powerful means of spiritual progress. It is a marvellous instrument, possessing unreckoned possibilities of perfection. But normally it is a mere clod of Matter, ignorant and inert and liable to suffering, and accustomed to mechanical movements. By its dual practice of Âsana² and Prânâyâma,³ Hathayoga changes this inert lump of flesh into a dynamo of vibrant energies, and, awakening the coiled serpent power at the base of its spinal column, carries the consciousness of man through the intermediate planes into the embrace of the Brahman. Âsana teaches the body to conserve in placid immobility the currents of vitality that flow into it from the universal life; and Prânâyâma controls the fivefold movement of life, purifies the entire nervous system by directing the circulation of the life-energy

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga or On Yoga-I* by Sri Aurobindo

² Fixed postures of the body for the purpose of Concentration.

³ Breathing exercises for the control of life-energy and mind.

through all the nerves, and, by a masterful manipulation of vitality, effects the release of the being from its subjection to the body and its normal impurities and disabilities. Hathayoga is a Yoga, that is to say, it is a means to a union with the Supreme, whatever the nature of that union may be; but in its excessive zeal for the purification and control of the body and the life-energy, it seems to forget its goal and remains constantly obsessed with the means. The results it achieves by an enormous output of energy can be obtained more easily and rapidly by other methods than the elaborate and cumbrous ones it employs. It is very widely, though by no means very wisely, practised in India, and betrays a facile tendency to degenerate into clap-trap and miracle-mongering. And yet in spite of its physical pre-occupation and frequent aberrations, it has made a substantial contribution to Yoga by its discovery of the potential powers and capacities of the human body and the life-energy playing in it. In the dynamic synthesis of the Integral Yoga, this contribution has been incorporated with certain vital modifications and given an important place in its comprehensive scheme of spiritual values.

RAJAYOGA

Unlike Hathayoga, Râjayoga does not start with the body and the life-energy, but with the mind of man. It does not dispense with Âsana and Prânâyâma, but, relegating them to a subsequent stage, gives the primary

importance to Yama and Niyama, which are mental disciplines calculated to conquer the desires and passions of the lower nature of man and, by an increase of moral purity and calm, help the concentration of his consciousness on the Supreme. It aims "at the liberation and the perfection not of the bodily, but of the mental being, the control of the emotional and sensational life, the mastery of the whole apparatus of thought and consciousness. It fixes its eyes on the chitta, that stuff of mental consciousness in which all these activities arise, and it seeks, even as Hathayoga with its physical material, first to purify and to tranquillise."¹ When the mind has been quieted, its passions quelled to a certain extent, and its aggressive egoism relentlessly discouraged, Râjayoga resorts to Âsana and Prânâyâma almost for the same purpose as does Hatha-yoga: for stilling the body, purifying the nervous system and controlling the life-energy, so that they may not impede or disturb the concentration and meditation through which it passes into Samadhi or trance of union. Râjayoga is an ancient science of spiritual culture, and its subtly graded eightfold process commands universal homage and trust among spiritual seekers. Even non-Hindu schools of Yoga, such as those of Jainism and Buddhism, owe much of the power and perfection of their systems to Râjayoga. But its preponderant pre-occupation with meditation and samadhi makes it rather inapt for any substantial life-effectuation and life-fulfilment,

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga or On Yoga-I.* by Sri Aurobindo

and the purification of the chitta which it achieves is a mere cleansing and quieting, just enough for the consciousness to enter undistracted into the silence of meditation, and not a radical conversion and transformation. The Integral Yoga weaves into its composite texture the outstanding contributions of Râjayoga—the importance it gives to psychological purification and the power of concentration, and the distilled essence of its supraphysical experiences—but refuses to be bound by its psychophysical means; and influenced by its anti-pragmatic bias.

THE THREE PATHS

Corresponding to the three principal powers of the human being,—will, knowledge and love—there are three Yogas in India: Karmayoga or the Yoga of Works, Jnânayoga or the Yoga of Knowledge, and Bhaktiyoga or the Yoga of Love and Devotion. Karmayoga takes its stand upon the will of man and turning it Godwards through a dynamic surrender of all actions and all movements of his nature, emancipates him from the yoke of the ego and leads him to a union with the object of his quest and worship. A living and constant self-consecration in action, and an uncompromising rejection of egoistic desires is the most effective method of Karmayoga. As most men live in their vital-physical being, predominantly concerned with the satisfaction of their desires and wants, the practice of Karmayoga is usually attended with rapid and remarkable results in the general purification of the nature,

and the opening and orientation of the being to the Divine. It is a dynamic Yoga, which has to be pursued from moment to moment avoiding the pitfalls of tamasic passivity on the one hand, and the heady drive of desires on the other. If all desires are renounced, including even the desire for the fruit of one's actions, and all actions are done as a conscious and living offering to the Divine, the knots of the ego are gradually loosened, and the consciousness of the Karmayogi rises into the limpid skies of Spirit, beyond the habitual insistences of the passing moments. Dwelling upon the conditions of this effort and the ideal to which they point, Sri Aurobindo says in his *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

"To live in God and not in the ego; to move, vastly founded, not in the little egoistic consciousness, but in the consciousness of the All-Soul and the Transcendent.

"To be perfectly equal in all happenings and to all beings, and to see and feel them as one with oneself and one with the Divine; to feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all and oneself in all.

"To act in God and not in the ego. And here, first, not to choose action by reference to personal needs and standards, but in obedience to the dictates of the living highest Truth above us. Next, as soon as we are sufficiently founded in the spiritual consciousness, not to act any longer by our separate will or movement, but more and more to allow action to happen and develop under the impulsion and guidance of a divine Will that surpasses

us. And last, the supreme result, to be exalted into an identity in knowledge, force, consciousness, act, joy of existence with the Divine Shakti; to feel a dynamic movement not dominated by mortal desire and vital instinct and impulse and illusive mental free will, but luminously conceived and evolved in an immortal self-delight and an infinite self-knowledge. For this is the action that comes by a conscious subjection and merging of the natural man into the divine Self and eternal Spirit; it is the Spirit that for ever transcends and guides this world-Nature."¹

Jnânayoga or the Yoga of Knowledge takes its stand upon the mind, or rather the intelligence of man, and, turning his thoughts towards the Divine, seeks to lift his consciousness to the absolute Existence. By an act of abstraction, the buddhi or the intelligence detaches itself from the other parts of the being and concentrates on the silent and immutable Brahman, or the sheer, unqualified Spirit. As in all other Yogas, it is the nature of the means that reflects the nature of the end. Jnânayoga, by making the buddhi the chief instrument of spiritual realisation, effects a split between the Brahman and the world, which is practically and essentially the same split that is made by Sâmkhya, and regarding the world or phenomenal Nature as illusory and dream-like, seeks to lead the individual consciousness to the undifferentiated unity, and

¹ This is a description of Karmayoga as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and made an important part of his Integral Yoga.

merge it in the featureless infinity of the One. By noetic abstraction, by sustained reflection on the sole, relationless Reality, by subtle reasoning and intense contemplation, it achieves an evulsion and extinction of the individual soul—evulsion from the illusion (Maya) of embodied existence, and extinction in the ineffable Absolute. It can be sincerely practised only by those whose intelligence has developed enough to separate itself from the sense-mind, the life and the body, and, by force of one-pointed thought, endeavour to escape out of what it regards as the nightmare of the world.

Bhaktiyoga or the Yoga of Love and Devotion makes the heart of man its principal means of fulfilment. Unlike Jñānayoga, it seeks the Lord of Love and Beauty and Bliss, and not the relationless, incommunicable Absolute. The emotions of the heart of man are turned in this Yoga towards the Divine, the supreme, eternal Lover of all creatures and their unique deliverer, the one, infinite Person, and not a mere impersonality. The very intensity of Godward love consumes the ego and abolishes its self-regarding concerns, and plunges the soul in the ecstasy of the divine embrace. Bhaktiyoga does not care for the reasoning and reflection of the mind, but feels in its faith the promise of its final fulfilment, which is an infinity of bliss in an eternal proximity to the supreme object of its love and adoration. The lover of God yearns after an intimate and thrilled union with Him, but it must be a union which permits of a certain ineffable distinction between him and his Beloved, and not a oneness in which his individuality

is completely extinguished and lost in His being. He wants to enjoy and not be obliterated in the ecstasy of the divine union.

Bhaktiyoga seeks a divine fulfilment of the emotional being of man, but leaves out his intellectual, volitional and physical parts in the cold shade of neglect. It envisages the love and delight of the Divine rather than His Light and Power.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE GITA

The Gitâ makes a monumental synthesis of these three paths of will, knowledge and love, and proposes to raise the whole consciousness of man to the Divine. Jnânayoga seeks the fulfilment of the intellectual being of man, and leaves the other parts to starve and languish. It seeks union with the Supreme in His eternal and undifferentiated existence (Sat) alone, and not in His Conscious-Force (Chit-tapas), and His immortal Delight (Ananda). Karmayoga envisages union in the Will, the Conscious-Force alone, and Bhaktiyoga in the eternal Delight. An integral turning of the whole human being through will, knowledge and love will have the unique result of realising the integrality of the Supreme, and an integral self-fulfilment by that realisation. The Gitâ lays down the three large lines of man's approach to the Divine Being with an unsurpassed clarity and catholicity. It shows how the lines intertwine and interfuse as they proceed towards the goal.

in which they unite and become indistinguishably one; but it leaves rather weak and obscure two things which are very important to the seeker of an integral consummation and have a direct and dynamic bearing upon his spiritual progress: the beginning and the end. The *Gîtâ* starts with *Sânkhyayoga*, that is to say, with a separation between *Purusha* and *Prakriti* through the instrumentality of the *buddhi*, the most enlightened part of the human mind; but it seems to be rather a poor and precarious beginning for the realisation of such a stupendously dynamic aim; for the *buddhi* is, after all, a tool of the lower nature, and cannot be a safe guide in such an adventure. There is a mightier, a more comprehensive beginning in the *Tântric Yoga*, which has much in common with *Karmayoga*; and the *Integral Yoga* of Sri Aurobindo absorbs some of its cardinal principles as it proceeds to lay the foundation of an integral divine fulfilment upon earth. The end of the *Gîtâ's* synthetic *Yoga* has been left wrapped in a mysterious hint of a total divine living for man; but the *uttamam rahasyam*, the supreme mystery, has nowhere been resolved and outlined before the gaze of the spiritual seeker. A living in the Divine, a constant, blissful and dynamic living in the *Purushottama*, emerges as the *grand finale* of the synthetic *Yoga* of the *Gîtâ*; but by what definite culminating steps will this consummation be attained, by what process of transmutation and transfiguration of this base metal of human nature, and what will be the status and active poise of the individual in that victorious apotheosis, and the purpose and influence of his

presence in the world, have been left to be worked out in the experience of the sâdhaka.

The Integral Yoga assimilates the triple path of the Gitâ, but starts its career with a far mightier sweep and divine dynamism, and a clear and comprehensive vision of the crowning achievement. It marches with firm but flexible steps, profiting by the landmarks of the principal Yogas of the past, but solely depending upon the divine Grace and following the subtle, unfaltering guidance of the divine Force. Because its creative vision is fixed upon the realisation and expression of the splendours of the Supermind in human life, much of its path is a revolutionary departure from the beaten tracks, and traverses many virgin fields and unexplored countries of the being. Especially, its aim of physical transformation is an original aim of far-reaching consequences, which makes it descend into the inconscient and subconscious abysses in order to purify and transform the human body, the life-energy and the physical consciousness of man at their very roots. It considers the body as a potential tabernacle of the unveiled Godhead, and bestows considerable care upon its radical transmutation. These are some of the characteristic aims and actions of the Integral Yoga which mark it out from the traditional Yogas, even from the great synthetic Yoga of the Gitâ, and stamp upon it the glory of aiming to create a supramental race of men upon earth.

CHAPTER III

AN EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS

PART I

AGES ago, when the natural unity of the spiritual vision and culture of the Vedas and the Upanishads began to give way before the developing complexity and individualistic self-affirmation of the parts of the being of man, each of which sought its own separate spiritual satisfaction and characteristic fulfilment to the neglect and exclusion of the others, the Gitâ propounded a magnificent synthesis, and paved the way for a harmonious growth of the whole human personality into the fullness and perfection of the Divine. All the important strands of spiritual culture, current at the time or regarded as essential, were woven together into that comprehensive synthesis, which aimed at raising man into the light and freedom of the dynamic divine consciousness. Nowhere, at no period of the spiritual history of mankind, has there ever been such a vast and powerful attempt at a synthesis, at a mighty gathering up of the distinct and divergent elements of human nature into a living and fruitful unity. Sâmkhyayoga, Karmayoga, Jnânayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Hathayoga, Râjayoga, Mantrayoga, each was given a place and a definite function in that manifold synthesis, and an

integrated system of spiritual culture, not indeed apparent on the surface, but implicit in the grain of its thought and active in the unfolding rhythm of its movement, was evolved for the purification and sublimation of the human nature and its transference from the floundering ignorance of the ego into the luminous freedom and bliss of the Divine. Works, knowledge and love, cured of their trenchant, separative tendencies, were blended and fused into a single movement of self-offering to the Supreme. The impersonality of the Brahman and the divine Personality, the silence of the omnipresent Immutable and the ceaseless flux of the cosmic movement, the beatific state of liberation and the continued performance of all mundane action,—these were some of the most outstanding reconciliations effected by the *Gitâ* at a crucial stage of the spiritual culture of India. And this synthesis was achieved, not by any religious or philosophical eclecticism, but by an embracing and unifying spiritual vision, and it stands unparalleled in its comprehensiveness in the annals of ancient mystical achievements.

Indian spirituality, however, described a downward curve soon after this gigantic synthesis had lost its hold upon the people's mind. The lower parts of the nature of man, released from the central control of the light of intuition and the co-ordinating force of the illumined intelligence, sought again, each in its distinctive way, its individual self-affirmation and self-satisfaction. Even when they turned towards spirituality, they pursued individual fulfilment, and cared little for a

total consummation. The Gitâ's synthesis had registered a magnificent success even in the midst of an apparent failure—it had outlined an ideal, the shining ideal of a harmonious perfection and a divine fulfilment of man, and left it as a seed, in the terrestrial atmosphere, to germinate and grow and prepare its future efflorescence in the evolving life of humanity; and if it failed at all, it was because man was not evolved enough for such a global spiritual endeavour: his mind, life and body needed a long individual preparation and development, an intense churning and psychic conversion and correlation, before they could consent to enter into the harmony of the integral orientation.

And thus passed century after eventful century, witnessing signal individual conquests and achievements, triumphs of new trends, enrichment of past gains, and an opening up of unforeseen possibilities, in the midst of a general spiritual decadence in India. When the Gitâ's synthesis, which had pivoted upon the illumined intelligence, disintegrated, the ethical mind of man rose to attain its absolute in a dual negation of all that was mystically and occultly spiritual, on the one hand, and all that was formal and ceremonial, on the other. But an ethical extremism usually harbours in itself two disquieting elements—an abstractionism tending to nihilism or agnosticism, and a progressive anti-pragmatism—which break up its original norm and reduce it to a pious, unproductive creed, if not to a tissue of compromises. Of the two elements, abstractionism is a denial of the ultimate Reality

in the experience of man, and anti-pragmatism a denial of the truth of material life; and both lead to a deep and rankling discontent in the popular mind, whatever may be their effect upon exceptional individuals. Nihilism or agnosticism cuts away the peaks of the being, and anti-pragmatism undermines its base, leaving man suspended in the shimmering haze of an impracticable ethical abstraction.

Therefore, the succeeding age saw the death of nihilism and agnosticism in the intense blaze of a resurgent spirituality, which drove straight towards the ultimate Reality, making knowledge the sole means of its realisation. But the anti-pragmatic tendency continued as ever. The very fervour of the precipitate drive and the intoxication of the supreme discovery engendered a greater indifference, even an aversion to the world and life. But life and Nature cannot long be ignored or spurned with impunity. A stream from the inalienable harmony of the supreme Light, life protests against all inequality or unbalance in the steps of the soul's ascent, and insists, with sharp pain, if need be, on the harmonious development of all the powers and potentialities of the human being, through whom it seeks its divine fulfilment.

The unilateral drive of the thought-mind culminated in the discovery or recovery of the apex of the ultimate Reality, but its mass, its infinite, living body and face of light remained undiscovered. The seeking of the thought-mind was, therefore, supplemented by the seeking of the awakened heart, and there seemed to be for a time—a

very short time indeed—a growing rapprochement between knowledge and love. The intellect of man can remain satisfied with abstractions, and even merge itself in the impalpable absolute of its overmastering conception; but the heart and life of man insist on concreteness. They demand that the object of their aspiration and adoration must become a living and tangible reality to them, real to human feeling and sight and sensation. This demand is the justification of their creation and action, and furnishes a clue to the mystery of the divine immanence in the world. And it is a law of Nature that whenever there is an insistent and legitimate demand for a particular experience and realisation in the being of man, there is always found a means to fulfil it. The human mind is content with knowing, but the heart and life of man yearn to contact and feel in the closeness of an increasing intimacy, and to become, what they love and adore. The total fulfilment of the human being is, therefore, a dynamic union and identification with the Supreme,—a union not only in His transcendence, but also in His universal immanence; not only in the abstractions of thought, but in the concreteness of feeling and sensation, will and action. That was why the experience of monism had to be enlarged and enriched by the experience of qualified monism, and even of dualism; and what seemed to be—and, in fact, was—a decline, was pregnant with great possibilities of expansion and enrichment for the individual parts of the human being and the ultimate unity and synthesis of them all. Alongside of this

development of the mind and heart of man, ran the development of his life—the conquest of its desires and the union of its will with the divine Will, which formed the kernel principle of the Tânttric and the Karma yogas. If we take a synoptic view of this progressive spiritual decline in India, we shall see that it was not really a decline, but a divinely-ordained descent of spirituality from the higher to the lower parts of the human being for their exploration, purification and sublimation into the eventual glory of the integral union with the Divine.

The age of the intellectual seeking was followed by the age of the steadily developing yearning of the human heart of love and delight. If the bare altitudes of the omnipresent Reality seemed to suffer a slight eclipse, its massive ranges and shining uplands, its colourful plateaus and smiling table-lands swam into human sight and the thrilled intimacy of human feeling. The distant, inconceivable, relationless Brahman of the Advaitin assumed the majesty and sublimity of the Nârâyan, or the beauty and bliss of the Krishna of the Bhakta.¹ The response of the heart was more passionate, more transporting, more dynamically purifying and exalting than that of the head, though it was beset with greater dangers from the contiguous sea of the unruly life-forces. Vishishtâdwaita, Dwaita, Dwaitâdwaita, Shuddhâdwaita emerged, not as conflicting truths of the Supreme, but as complementary

¹ The immutable Impersonal was swallowed up in the infinite personality of the Supreme Being, the Purusha of the Upanishads, the Purushottama of the Gitâ.

envisagings of the various aspects of the One, who is bound neither by His diversity nor by His unity. In the last phase of the cult of love and delight as embodied in Sri Chaitanya, one of the supreme mysteries of the relation between the Divine and the human soul was seized and revealed—the unimaginable, inexpressible mystery of the deepest rapture of union-in-difference between the Divine and the human soul. This rapture is implied but not felt in the Sâyujya of the Adwaitin, in which the individual consciousness is abolished in the supreme Consciousness, and there is no persistence of the relation of the knower and the object of knowledge to admit of a human enjoyment of the bliss of the perfect union. But this bliss is the highest experience of the embodied soul, the acme of its spiritual freedom and perfection. In Sâyujya, there is, in fact, no union as such, but an extinction of the individual soul (an illusory soul at that according to the Vedantin!) in the undifferentiated absoluteness of the One. It is to the credit of the Yoga of love and delight that it has made the highest union a feasible realisation, and its ineffable ecstasy of joy the crest of divine fulfilment.

Another line of Yoga, the mighty Tantra, concerned itself with the spiritual purification and preparation of life and its will. It was a very daring adventure, which necessitated a descent into the dark, subconscious regions of the being and a grappling with the most powerful forces of human nature, desire and lust and passion, in their own field; but it had to be undertaken, if the whole being and nature

of man were to be transmuted into the being and nature of the Divine to ensure the integrality and permanence of the dynamic divine union, which is the goal of human life. The task to which Tantra addressed itself was immense and infinitely difficult, and its failure far outweighed its slender success; but it evoked into activity a possibility of perfection which, since the days of the Vedas, had lain latent and overlooked in the human consciousness. This was the great contribution of Tantra. Its ideal was, not the self-annihilating merger in the Brahman, *sāyujya*, nor an eternal proximity to the luminous presence of the Beloved, *sāmīpya* and *sālokya*, but a union through the remoulding of human nature into the divine nature, a growing into the likeness of the Divine, *sādrśya*, *sādharmya*.

The next part to feel the pressure of the descending spirit-force was the physical being of man. Two immediate outstanding consequences of this descent were, first, a growing obsession of the national mind with material things and, second, an uprush of the subconscious scum and obscurity. But that is an eventuality which has to be faced in any work of radical purification.

At this juncture of Indian spiritual culture, when the higher light seemed to hide behind the veil, and the material life pressed forward with its clamorous demands and irresistible claims, came the impact of the materialistic West, at once disruptive and galvanizing. It disrupted the spiritual values which had been the sustenance of Indian culture, and galvanised the material and intellectual life

of the people. The fatigue and the flagging of vitality which had marked the close of a long epoch of inner exploration and outer creation, and the incrustation that had begun in time-worn traditions and dead formalism, seemed to disappear under this powerful and fateful impact. The material life which is the foundation of Spirit's self-manifestation on earth, and which had been sedulously neglected and discouraged by the followers of Jnânayoga in their overmastering mental absorption, or by the Bhaktas, in their emotional fervours, and blighted under the mist of Illusionism (*Mâyāvāda*) and the chill of apotheosised asceticism, revived, widened and throbbed with new, creative impulses. A general awakening, a pervasive renaissance was the result of the absorption of the influence of the West, which came to India as the priest and champion of the life-spirit, and the interpreter of its evolutionary values.

The last stage had been reached. With the long past of her unparalleled spirituality, rich with signal achievements and varied conquests, not dead, but living and vibrant behind her back, India accepted the quickening message of Western Materialism and the gift of life it brought to her. But India cannot live without God. To follow in the steps of the West would have been to advance towards spiritual suicide. A life of material welfare and intellectual advancement in front of her, and a life of light and immortality and spiritual fulfilment behind her, India stood uncertain and wavering for a brief moment, as if poised on the brink of a crucial decision. But her soul

repeated once more what it had declared throughout the history of its evolution, "*yenāham nāmṛtāsyām kimaham tena kuryām?*"—"What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?" India accepted the gift of life, but reverted to the fount of Light to link the two together, so that her future may be great again, and glorious and immortal with the unprecedented triumphs of a dynamic spirituality. At that passing moment of the crucial decision, she seemed to glimpse, as if in a flash, the meaning of her soul's long travail through the eventful centuries of a declining curve, and the saviour Hand that was guiding her destiny. She clasped the Hand and decided in favour of the life in Light, the Life Divine.

The first reaction of the soul of India to the impact of Western Materialism was a reaffirmation of the bare truth of the transcendent Absolute, and an uncompromising rejection of almost all that constitutes the richness and diversity of Indian spirituality. It was, as if, at that moment of eager return, the soul of India was trying to clutch at the roots of spirituality, which was its mainstay, and hack at the branches and leaves and flowers that had developed out of those very roots during the long centuries of its evolution. But the ardours of the first return soon shed their narrow intensity and began to assume the large catholicity of the ancient spiritual tradition; for the decision taken by the soul of India at the fateful turning of its life was not for any narrow and one-sided achievement, however high it might be, but for the widest synthesis: for the reconciliation of Spirit

and Matter, Heaven and Earth, Light and Life, the One and the Many.

As the most perfect embodiment of that decision of the national soul, an epitome of its past manifold achievements and a harbinger of the great synthesis that was preparing in the womb of the approaching future, came Sri Râmakrishna. Four things in his illustrious life stand out with a remarkable significance. First, his coming to live very near the most modernised, that is to say, westernised, metropolis of the country. He built his spiritual citadel in close vicinity to Calcutta from where he could aim infallible shots at the monster of Materialism and bring to birth a robust and opulent spirituality in India. Second, he practised most of the great Yogas of the world (not only of India), and attained the highest realisation possible in each. Third, he conquered and converted the most representative Indian of the times, a brilliant product of Western culture, Vivekananda—Narendranath Dutt as he was then named—and moulded him into his chief instrument for the accomplishment of his mission. Fourth, he heralded the coming synthesis in spirituality and foreshadowed something of its outline in his life and teachings.

In Sri Râmakrishna Indian spirituality came to close grips with the materialistic culture of the West. And what was the result of the combat? Vivekânanda and resurgent India. Vivekânanda, the "cyclonic Hindu", as he was described in America, the preacher of the gospel of the Vedânta, shook the whole world with his message of the

unity of all life and the divinity of all men. Perhaps he did not bring out the full significance of the central truth of his Master's vision: the synthesis of all religions. This synthesis was interpreted as meaning simply that all religions lead to the same goal, but it seems hardly likely that Sri Râmakrishna underwent the superhuman labour of practising the principal Yogas of the world only to arrive at and vindicate the truth of this time-worn truism. There was a great teleological intention behind. Though he practised the Yogas separately, yet he assimilated the highest achievements of them all, which combined and crystallised into a sort of synthesis in the depths of his being. He retained the distilled essence of each in himself till the last day of his life. He was at once a man of knowledge, a man of unfathomable love and devotion, a man of undeviating will and power, and, as the world knows only too well, a creator of probably the greatest paradoxical personality—a Jnânayogi-cum-Karmayogi—of modern times. He was an Adwaitin, a Vishishtâdwaitin, even a Dwaitin, a Christian of Christians, and a devout Moslem—all these and many things more rolled into one. His successive practice of the different Yogas was an experiment, a bold breaking of the ground; but the result was an incipient synthesis, unavoidably somewhat vague and uncertain in the then state of spiritual possibilities, but an unmistakable prelude to its coming perfection. A synthesis of Yogas means an integration of all the parts of the human being, including even the physical, which has as much claim to perfection and divine fulfilment as

any other, and their global turning to the Divine.

Our rapid survey of the spiritual curve of India since the Upanishadic age has shown us that when the synthesis of the Gitâ broke up, it was the intellect of man that turned towards the supreme Reality and underwent, in consequence, a great purification and heightening; the heart had then its turn, and the life, and, last, the physical consciousness. The downward curve seems to be complete now, and there are indications that the upward has already begun. The synthesis that Sri Ramakrishna foresaw, foreshadowed and foretold, a mightier synthesis than even that of the Gitâ, seems to be the destined means of the integral perfection aspired after by the progressive mind of modern man. A totality in aspiration betokens a totality in realisation. The entire being of man yearning for the Divine shall attain the most perfect union with the entire being of the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo stands for this entire turning, this completest synthesis and integral spiritual fulfilment of man. Having realised it in himself, he calls upon humanity to proceed towards the Divine by the way of this synthesis. His call is the call of God, the call of the earth-soul, the call of the Time-Spirit, the call of the East and the West, and the call of the awaking soul of man himself. The world moves forward to a multi-dimensional synthesis.

PART II

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE STATES OF BRAHMAN

THERE are three basic postulates of the synthesis which forms the heart of Sri Aurobindo's Integral or Purna Yoga. The first is that no union with the Supreme can be called perfect unless it is a union in all His states, poises, and modes of being. The supreme Purusha or the omnipresent Reality has four poises or statuses, according to the Upanishads—"soyamātmā catuṣpāt". The first poise is that of the waking state (*jāgaritasthāna*), which is extroverted or externally cognitive (*vahihprajña*), and enjoyer of the gross (*sthūlabhuk*). This is the *vaiśvānara* or *virāṭ* state of Brahman. The second poise is that of the dream state (*svapnasthāna*) introverted, or internally conscious and enjoyer of the subtle (*praviviktabhuk*). This is the *Taijas* state of Brahman. The third is that of the deep-sleep state (*suṣuptisthāna*), unified, a massed consciousness (*prajñānaghana*), made of bliss (*ānandamaya*) and enjoyer of bliss (*ānandabhuk*). This is the Lord of all (*sarveśvara*), the all-knowing (*sarvajña*), the inner control (*antaryāmin*), the source and dissolution of all beings (*prabhavāpyayau*). This is the status of the creative Godhead, the sovereign majesty and glory of the self-deploying Brahman. The fourth poise is that state of Brahman which is neither extroverted nor introverted, neither massed consciousness nor unconsciousness, unseen, relationless, featureless, inconceivable, ineffable,

the supreme Peace (*śāntam*), the supreme Good (*śivam*) and the supreme, inalienable Oneness without a second (*advaitam*). This is the absolute state of Brahman.¹

This illuminating description of the integral Brahman is preceded by a categoric affirmation, interspersed in many representative Upanishads, that verily everything here is Brahman—*sarvam hyetad Brahma*. There is nothing like illusion or hallucination; the world and all its names and forms—*idam sarvam*—all are, indeed, the indivisible and all-pervading Brahman...“*Brahmaivedam viśvam idam variṣṭam*”—the supreme Brahman and no other is all this world. And yet it is no panthesim that the Upanishads preach; for though Brahman is *viśvātmā*, the Soul of the cosmos, and *viśvarūpaḥ*, He who has assumed the form of the cosmos, He is yet the womb of the cosmos, *viśvayoniḥ*, and beyond all cosmos and cosmic differentiations, *bahiṣca*.

It is, then, evident that the integrality of Brahman includes all the above four statuses, and that to realise them all, not successively, but simultaneously, is to realise the integral Brahman, the supreme Divine or Purushottama, who is a Person, superior to the Immutable (*akṣarādapi cottamaḥ*) and higher than the Unmanifest (*abyaktāt paraḥ*). Beyond this Person, this supreme Purush, there is nothing whatsoever (*Puruṣānna param kiñcit*). The ideal of the *nirbeeja* or *nirvikalpa* samadhi, a complete self-loss by absorption in the immutable Absolute

¹ For a fuller description see Māndukya Upanishad.

is not the highest ideal, for it takes cognisance of only the peak state, and not of all the four constituent states of Brahman; and as the head of a man is not his whole body, so the *turīya* or transcendent Absolute is not the integral Brahman. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga aims at the realisation of the integral union with the integral Divine, which means a union in all the four Brâhmic poises together. This is his synthesis of the poises and states of Reality, and it is on the basis of this synthesis that he has reared his immense structure of the Life Divine for man upon this earth. For, this synthesis does not exclude anything; it includes all, the world and all its multiform relations and activities as the waking state (waking from our standpoint, for really speaking, Brahman is ever awake—*sa jāgarti*—) of Brahman, as well as His *turīya* or absolute status. This synthesis is an epoch-making contribution to Yoga and Philosophy. Since the synthesis of the Gitâ, which, by the way, has hardly ever been practised in the mediaeval and modern times except in a fragmentary way, either by the exclusive pursuit of knowledge or love or works, no spiritual culture has based itself with any steady vision and firm faith upon the fourfold integrality of Brahman. Most of them—I might say, all, including even Tantra—have been more or less swayed by the ascetic and renunciatory tendency, initiated in the Upanishadic times and fostered and developed by later extremist spirituality, and envisaged the *turīya* or the transcendent Unthinkable as the ultimate goal of the being of man. Jnânayoga, Bhakti yoga, Karmayoga, Râjayoga,

Hathayoga, Tantra, all have fixed upon the supracosmic consummation, whether it is Moksha or Nirvâna, or a permanent proximity to the Supreme Beloved in a world of eternal Light and Love, Goloka or Vaikuntha. It is Sri Aurobindo's synthesis alone that recovers the unifying vision of the Vedic and Upanishadic seers and reinstates the *catuspât*, fourfold, Brahman in the heart of man as the sole object of aspiration and realisation; and it is again his synthesis alone that bids fair to make that object of human aspiration and realisation a manifest Reality, a self-revealed Splendour here in this dim world of Matter.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE PARTS OF MAN

The second postulate is that this union with *catuspât* Brahman can and is to be realised not only by the soul, but by the whole being—the soul and nature—of man. The mind, the life and even the body of man are to participate, as well as the soul, in the blissful experience of identity, union and communion with the Supreme Being. How can that be possible? How can the twilit mind, the restless, desire-driven life, and the dense, obtuse and inert body of man house the ineffable Presence, or even enter into the ecstasy of some kind of union with it? Is it not the human intelligence that detaches itself from the rest of the nature and, by the final act of self-extinction, leaves the soul in the unutterable peace and silence of the Impersonal? or the ardours of the human heart in their fiery intensity that plunge the soul into the

bliss of the divine embrace? In either case, there is an abstraction of the most developed part of the being from the rest, which remains sunk in its habitual obscurity, or is at best distantly irradiated by the reflected light of the abstracted part. The union is enjoyed by the soul in the depths of the human consciousness or on its serene summits, but not in the whole being. The Vedic seers knew the secret of making the divine light, the divine bliss and force accessible to the entire human nature, and some of them tried individually to realise it; but there was no conception of making that realisation an imperative collective ideal and aspiration. And yet that is the very purpose of the creation of man, and his ultimate and inevitable destiny in the material world.

Sri Aurobindo says that each part of the being of man is derived from the Supreme, is permeated and sustained by the Supreme, and is developed and led towards a conscious union and communion with Him, which is its birth-right. Each part is a living and indispensable member of the evolving organism, and the eventual harmonious perfection and divine fulfilment, which is the goal of human existence, can be possible only through the perfection and fulfilment of each part, each faculty and each function of the human being. This was the knowledge upon which the ancient Vedic culture was founded, though it was not fully worked out in that age, and this was the knowledge which continued, if grown somewhat remote and pale, down to the closing period of the Upanishads, investing the whole of human

existence with a sacramental significance. Matter, of which the body is made, is Brahman (*annam brahman*), life is Brahman and mind is Brahman—so declare the Upanishads. This being the essential truth of the parts of human nature, it would not be irrational to hold that, however debased or darkened they may have become by reason of their evolution from Inconscience, their conversion to their spiritual equivalents is not only possible, but well within the ambit of a strong probability. But what are their spiritual equivalents? From what principles of Brahman are they severally derived? From Sat, the self-existent eternal substance of Sachchidânanda, comes Matter, turned gross and dense by the Inconscience out of which it emerges in evolution; from Chit or the Consciousness of Sachchidânanda comes life, from Ananda comes the soul, and from Vijnâna or what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, comes mind. If, therefore, the human mind could be united with its original term and source, the Supermind, the life with Chit-tapas, the body with the infinite, immortal substance, and the soul with the plenary Ananda, there would then be an automatic union between Sachchidânanda and the entire being of man.

There is another point to consider in this connection. Each of the three primal principles, Sat, Chit and Ananda, contains in itself the other two, so that Sat can never be without Chit and Ananda, nor Chit without Sat and Ananda, nor Ananda without Sat and Chit; which inversely means that each of the parts of our being has all the potentiality of Sachchidânanda in it, and a perfect

development of any implies a perfect development of all. But such is the complex interrelation and interaction of the parts of our being that without a radical illumination and transformation, and a harmonious unification of them, they cannot be united with Sachchidânanda. It is not so difficult to have a little light in the mind or a little joy and peace in the heart or an intermittent play of a higher force in our life-parts; but in order to be united with the Divine in an undeviating closeness and constancy of God-possessed thought and feeling and emotion and will and sensation and action, in order, that is to say, to belong entirely and irrevocably to the Master of our existence in all the ways of our being, two things are essential, two that form a distinctive feature of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga: integration and transformation. Integration means the harmonising and welding of the different parts of the being into an organic whole, so that they can move in perfect unison in the steps of the divine Will; and transformation means a radical change and conversion of the natural parts into their spiritual equivalents, so that the whole of human nature may be sublimated and transfigured into the divine Supernature. This transformation, as we have already seen above, is not mere purification or quiescence of the nature parts; it is nothing less than a turning of the lead of man's normal humanity into the pure gold of divinity. And the crux of the labour of transformation is the illumination and conquest of the subconscious and inconscient layers of our being, which teem with the

aboriginal impressions and impulses of our unregenerate nature. They have to be illuminated and emancipated from the hold of ignorance and inertia, if the integration and transformation of our nature are to be complete. The Gitâ's way of the renunciation of all desire and attachment is the right way, and a very effective method of purification, so far as the surface nature is concerned and the regions just below the surface, but it hardly touches the murky depths where the animal appetites and passions, and the inertia and falsehood and obscurity of our material heritage lie simmering or slumbering in a promiscuous mass. These depths too are part of ourself, they too have a voice, probably often an imperious voice, in the complex business of our life. No synthesis can be complete and enduring that neglects to deal radically with these dark recesses of our being. And for a radical and effective dealing with them, the light and force we command in our mental consciousness are all too feeble and inadequate. The dismal failure of the great Tântic experiment is a standing warning to those who would venture to raise up the blind forces of these regions in order to purify and transmute them, without taking previous care to arm themselves with the authentic light of the Divine. The light of the human mind can be no guide in these arcane depths; even the light of the spiritualised mind has no imperative power here. The Subconscient and the Inconscient submit only to the supernal Light of the *viññâna*, the supreme creative Light, and to no other.

No post-Vedic Yoga except Tantra has ever had this ideal of the integration and transformation of human nature in view. The adventure of the Tânttric Yoga was large and amazingly bold, but less profound,—its union with Light was not so sure as its polarity to Force. The other Yogas did not bother about this ideal. Their object being to help the soul pass out of the meshes of Nature, they took hold of any one part or principle of human nature, and used it as a gate of exit. Either knowledge or love or will to action, carried to its consummation, was deemed potent enough to release the soul into the infinity and immortality of the Absolute, or the love and delight of the transcendent Godhead. A synthesis was either not conceived at all or thought redundant, even impracticable.

But if the object is to enrich and expand the being of man till it unites with the Supreme and manifests Him in a splendour of Light and Power and Bliss, then integration and transformation impose themselves. The Gitâ's triple path of knowledge, love and works, followed with an utter sincerity of aspiration and self-giving, resolves many anomalies and discords of the human nature, and forges its divergent parts into a more or less harmonious unity; but that is not enough, so long as the synthesis, thus attained, is confined to the mental plane, however high and wide it may be; the synthetic sacrifice has to ascend beyond mind and, invoking a descent of the supernal Light, achieve, first, a reproduction of itself and then a reproduction of the divine glory in the summmerged parts of the human being.

THE SUPRAMENTALISED SYNTHESIS

Therefore, the third postulate is that the synthesis of knowledge, love and works, or of man's mental, vital and physical parts, organised round the soul or the psychic being as the quickening and co-ordinating centre, has to climb to the Supermind or the supreme Truth-Consciousness (*rta-cit*), in order to be remade into its inviolable harmony, and then descend, led by the Light and Force of the Supermind, to instal itself in the chaos and obscurity of the Subconscient and the Inconscient. Synthesis on the expressive planes of our being, synthesis on its creative summits, and synthesis at its nether base—this is the triple formula of the synthesis envisaged by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE TERMS OF THE SOUL

There are two more aspects of the synthesis aimed at by the Integral Yoga. In most of the Yogas, the individuality of the human soul, widened and impersonalised, is wafted straight to the Transcendent. Universality, which is the middle term of the soul, is almost left undeveloped, or is developed, more or less imperfectly, only on its static side, and hardly, except in the *sām-rājyasiddhi*¹ of Tantra, on the dynamic. In some Yogas the dynamic universality is studiously eschewed. But

¹ The double spiritual empire over self and the world.

the destiny of the embodied soul is to possess simultaneously and with a plenary perfection, both in status and dynamis, its triple term of existence—individuality, universality and transcendence. Its union with the Supreme cannot be complete unless it is a union with Him in His universal immanence as well as in His featureless transcendence. The three terms of the embodied souls have their corresponding terms in the Supreme and a constant and complete union between them is the peak of human attainment. The Divine has to be realised as the One, but also as the many, as each being, each thing and each happening; and the liberated soul, liberated also in its nature, must rise into an identification, at once static and dynamic, with the cosmic Divine, and feel itself in all and all in itself, God in all and all in God, even while enjoying the indescribable bliss of the supracosmic union. And it is important to note that this universality of the soul is not meant to be a passing phase or a transitional passage, in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo,—a passage through which the soul is to escape into the silence of the Incommunicable; it is to be firmly held and permanently possessed as the middle term of its spiritual existence. Its self-realisation and divine realisation will be incomplete without its secure participation in the universality of Brahman; and it is this universality that justifies its continued co-operation, even after its individual liberation, in the upward labour of all beings towards the freedom and bliss of the Divine: *sambhutyām-rtamaśnute*, “by the Birth he enjoys immortality.”

"Immortality beyond the universe is not the object of manifestation in the universe, for that the Self always possessed. Man exists in order that through him the Self may enjoy Immortality in the birth as well as in the non-becoming".¹ Individual liberation is not the end of man's life; his glory lies in striving through countless births, if need be, for the liberation of his fellow-mortals who are equally his own self, and without whose liberation his own personal freedom remains an imperfect attainment. And the object of liberation is not an ultimate retreat from all individual and universal play of God's delight in creation into His immutable transcendence, but a perfect manifestation of His Love and Light and Power and Bliss in this suffering and inharmonious world, His unimpeded self-expression in humanity.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE THREE VEDANTIC REALISATIONS

Another synthesis effected by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is between the visions and experiences of the three great schools of Vedantic spiritual culture, Advaita, Vishistâdvaita and Dvaita. It is not a philosophical synthesis, though it has a momentous bearing on philosophy, but a spiritual, rather a supramental, synthesis, which validates and explains the realisation of each of the three Vedântic schools, and fuses them all into its manifold comprehensiveness. According to Sri Aurobindo, there

¹ "Isha" Upanishad by Sri Aurobindo.

are three poises of the creative Supermind. "The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in the One and the One in the Many; the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us, at a lower level, the illusion of the separate ego."¹ In the first poise there is no individualisation, all is held and developed in the unitarian consciousness as one, and not as many. When the reflection of this primary poise of the Supermind falls upon our purified and tranquillised mental consciousness, we lose all sense of individuality and are immersed in the illimitable ocean of unity. This is the basic truth and rationale of pure Advaitism. In the second poise of the Supermind, "the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, realising it by a sort of apprehending consciousness, following it, occupying and inhabiting its works, seeming to distribute itself in its forms."² There is here a multiple concentration and a creation of countless soul-forms, but all within the fundamental unity and harmony of the One. The original unity is manifestly and effectively modified, but there is yet no division or essential difference. When the reflection of this secondary poise of the Supermind falls upon our calm mind, we realise our soul-individuality

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

as distinct from and at the same time united with the One. This is the truth and justification of the experience of Qualified Monism. In the third poise the stress of consciousness falls on multiplicity, though well within the infinite play of unity. The soul-forms develop an increasing network of relations among themselves as well as with the One, and seem to be tending towards the diversified delight of the One in the Many and of the Many in the One. This poise is "a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity—no longer unity qualified by a subordinate dualism—between the individual Divine and its universal source."¹ This is the truth of Dualism or Dvaitavâda.

Now, all these three experiences are genuine and perfectly valid, and an integral supramental realisation would regard them as indispensable strains of its developing harmonies. It is only the human mind with its inveterate habit of exclusive emphasis, trenchant divisions, and rigid definitions that insulates the complementaries and posits them as contradictories. It is the human mind with its separative perception and analytical reasoning that cuts up the unity of existence into innumerable bits, and goes blundering through them in a vain attempt to arrive at their original unity and fundamental truth.

Sri Aurobindo's epochal synthesis, embracing and manifold in its nature, is at once a repudiation and a

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

fulfilment of the reasoning mind of man. It is destined to lead mankind to the full realisation and enjoyment of the unity in diversity, which is the secret of creation and the goal of evolution. After the intuitive synthesis of the Upanishads, there was the illumined intellectual¹ synthesis of the *Gitâ*, and then, on a slightly lower scale, but with a greater fire and vigour of the will, the psycho-vital synthesis of Tantra. Today, standing on the threshold of the new era, and in full possession of the living essentials of the spiritual-cultural past, not only of India but of the whole world; Sri Aurobindo announces another synthesis, a vast supramental synthesis—the Supermind or *vijñāna* is the eternal home of all harmonies—for the ascent of man into the truth and unity of the One and the descent of the One into the whole being and life of man. The divine manifestation is the key-note of this synthesis, and universal humanity is the field of its perfection.

¹ All these syntheses were spiritual, but their characterisation made here is from the standpoint of the distinctive means employed by each of them.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRIPLE AIM

THE CONCEPTION OF THE INFINITE AND ETERNAL

UNION with the Infinite and Eternal can be said to be the aim of all Yogas. But this is a general description, which easily lends itself to various interpretations. The aim of the Sâmkhyayoga is the release of the immaculate Purusha from his false self-identification with the mechanical workings of Nature into the immobile peace and silence of his unfettered self-existence. Jnânayoga aims at a union with the Infinite and Eternal in Its ineffable transcendence; Bhaktiyoga with the infinite and eternal Lord of Love and Bliss and Beauty; and Tantra, first with the infinite and eternal Mother of the universe as the supreme Shakti, and, as the culminating movement of its Yoga, with the infinite and eternal Brahman beyond all names and forms. The difference in the conception of the Infinite and Eternal determines the difference in the conception of the methods of Yoga and their practice.

The one distinctive feature of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is that its conception of the Infinite and Eternal is different from that of all the schools of Yoga in India, except of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gîtâ. The Infinite and Eternal to whom it claims to lead is the

One without a second, the omnipresent Reality, the immanent and transcendent Purusha, who is every being, every thing, every happening, the Creator and Master of the whole universe, which is His phenomenal self-extension in Himself, and at the same time the inconceivable, unutterable, supracosmic Absolute. The organic unity of all these aspects and states of being constitutes the Purusha or Deva of the Vedas, or the Purushottama of the Gitâ. This integrality of its conception of the infinite and eternal Brahman makes the philosophy of the Integral Yoga the most rational, perfect and comprehensive monism ever formulated by spiritual experience. Here there is no Maya or Karma or Satan to cut across or cast a shadow on the all-constituting and all-exceeding unity of Brahman. All is Brahman, the mutable as well as the Immutable, the finite as well as the Infinite, the many as well as the One.

“The Purusha has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; encompassing the earth on all sides, He stands ten fingers’ width above.” (*Śvetâśvatara*: 3,14.)

“Divine, formless is the Purusha, He is without and He is within, unborn, breathless, mindless and luminously pure, He is higher than the highest Immutable.

“And of Him is born life and the mind and all the organs of sense, and of Him are Ether and Air and Light and Water and Earth that holdeth all.” (*Mundaka*: 2, 1.)

THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS OR SUPERMIND

This all-embracing monism being the philosophical foundation of the Integral Yoga, the means and method of its practice and the way of its attainment must necessarily be comprehensive and all-inclusive, a synthetic and unifying movement, progressing through the complexity of the human being towards the integral divine fulfilment. But what is the nature of this unifying movement of progress, and what is that plane of consciousness on which the final reconciliation between the One and the many, between Time and Eternity, silence and activity, and Spirit and Matter can be effected? We are awake on the physical, vital and mental planes of consciousness, all of them planes of the separative ignorance, which makes us see and feel things, not in their essential unity, but as distinct units and divided fragments. This is a false seeing and a false feeling. We do not see the truth, because we do not see the whole of things. The discords of the surface elements disturb or depress us, because we do not perceive the underlying harmony. And when we travel beyond the triple separative consciousness, we enter by trance into a state of absorbed immersion in the unconditioned Infinite, which excludes all awareness of the normal waking state and its movements. Both of these states are mutually exclusive, the *kṣara*¹ and the *akṣara*,² and a simultaneous possession of them has been held to be extremely difficult,

^{1, 2} Mobile and immobile

if not impossible. But if God possesses them together in Himself, it stands to reason that a perfect union with Him must naturally make us participate in that simultaneous possession. What then is the secret of God's possession of both?

The supreme Divine includes and transcends the *kṣara*¹ and the *akṣara*² at the same time, because He is greater than the universe of His own creation and "higher than the highest Immutable". He takes His stand upon the plane of the Truth-Consciousness, the *ṛta-cit* of the Vedic description, the plane of the Truth, the Right and the Vast, which is the eternal home of unity and harmony. Basing this plane of the creative Truth-consciousness is His own being of Sat, Chit and Ananda, which is the ultimate definition of the utter and absolute Ineffable. Below are the worlds of His becoming, of flux and formation and manifold self-expression. It is this plane of the all-creating and all-governing Truth-consciousness, called the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo, that is the secret of the fusion and unity of all the aspects and attributes of Brahman, and the final harmonisation of all universal opposites. It alone permits of a full realisation of the *catuspāda* or integral Brahman without causing any exclusiveness of concentration on the part of our being, or an abeyance of any layer of its consciousness or movement of its force. This all-comprehending Supermind is the principal target of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

¹, ² Mobile and immobile

THE ASCENT TO THE SUPERMIND—THE FIRST AIM

The foremost aim of the Integral Yoga being the Supermind, it cannot rest satisfied with any realisation short of the very highest and widest which the Supermind alone can give. It accepts and profits by all important wayside experiences: the Sâmkhya experience of detached freedom, the silence of the Nirvâna of Buddhism, the unfathomable peace of the immanent Immutable, or the thrilled power of the universal Divine; but it proceeds beyond all these to the great goal of its difficult endeavour—the solar illumination and all-harmonising unity of the creative Supermind. It is not by trance or an exclusive awakening in the depths or on the heights of the being, accompanied by a partial or complete sleep of the surface parts and a temporary suspension of their natural movements, that it ascends towards its goal; its process is rather one of inclusion and synthesis, and a raising of the integrated being of man into the glories of the Supermind. It insists on an increasing expansion of the waking human consciousness, and its ascent beyond the mind, beyond even the spiritual ranges of the mind, to that plane where Sachchidânanda stands as at once the transcendent Absolute and the timeless Creator of the universe. This ascent is a superhuman labour, impossible of achievement except by the Grace of the Divine; for, it involves an opening of the higher layers of our being and an awakening into all the states and ranges of our consciousness in which we are at present fast asleep. According to ancient knowledge, the

individual soul lives simultaneously in five sheaths or *koshas*, but in most human beings, it is awake only in the three lower sheaths—the material or the food sheath, the vital sheath, and the mental; it has yet to awake in the supra-mental or Vijnâna sheath, and the sheath of Bliss (*ānanda-maya koṣa*). This awakening, unaccompanied by any ataxy or catalepsy in any part of the lower being, is what is known as ascent in the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo says that as man has risen from the life-mind of the animal, wrapped up in the chaotic cravings and appetites of the lower nature, into the comparative clarity and control of the mind of reason and reflection, so one day, by the force of the evolutionary *élan* of his soul, he will rise to the Truth-conscious Supermind and live in its all-revealing Light. It is not stray sallies into the Spirit-skies that are meant by the term “ascent”, in its widest sense, in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. By ascent is meant, first, a climb to a higher plane of consciousness, and then a more or less secure establishment in its characteristic principle and power. Every such ascent gives a new poise to the being and, opening up sealed horizons of vision, imparts a new rhythm to its movements. But the culminating evolutionary ascent is that to the Supermind, in which the human consciousness undergoes a complete reversal and an unprecedented transformation. Instead of the mental ignorance, a plenary knowledge; instead of division, a perfect, manifold unity; instead of discord, an unassailable harmony; and instead of the besetting limitations of the human existence, an unvalled infinity, are the basis of the

life in the Supermind. All that the human soul yearns for, all that the human nature is meant to incarnate and reveal, and all that is the ultimate sense and destiny of the human birth are found in the *ṛtam jyotiḥ* or Truth-Light of the Supermind. If an ascent to a higher consciousness is a new birth, an ascent to the supramental consciousness is a birth into the Supernature, *parā prakṛti*.

The ascent has two stages, initial and final. At the initial stage, the most developed part of the consciousness of the Yogi rises to the Higher Mind, which is "a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge." "An all-awareness emerging from the original identity, carrying the truths the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously, formulating and by self-power of the Idea effectually realising its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge."¹ From the Higher Mind it rises to the Illumined Mind, which is a mind not of Truth-thought, but of Truth-vision. "Here the clarity of the spiritual intelligence, its tranquil daylight gives place or subordinates itself to an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the Spirit."² From the Illumined Mind it climbs to the Intuition, which is a "power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity."³ Its perception is "more than sight, more than conception:

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

it is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence.”¹ The next step of the ascent takes the consciousness to the Overmind, which is “a principle of global knowledge.” In it “intuition, illumined sight and thought enlarge themselves; their substance assumes a greater substantiality, mass, energy, their movement is more comprehensive, global, many-faceted, more wide and potent in its truth-force: the whole nature, knowledge, aesthesis, sympathy, feeling, dynamism become more catholic, all-understanding, all-embracing, cosmic, infinite.”² This is the highest that the human consciousness can achieve, sustained and aided by the divine Force; but the next step beyond, the crucial step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast (*satyam, ṛtam, bṛhat*) can only be a gift of the divine Grace, a crowning boon and blessing of the supreme Mother, and never an achievement of the will and force of man. The ascent to the Supermind is an ascent to the eternal home of the supernal Light and Force, the all-comprehending and all-controlling status of Sachchidânanda, the sun-realm of Purushottama.

This initial ascent is answered at every step by a descent of the characteristic power of the plane attained, which performs a dual work of liberation by purification and transformation, on the one hand, and integration and sublimation, on the other. The liberation meant here is

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

not only the liberation of the soul, but also of the whole nature in all its parts. But it is only a partial and preliminary work of liberation and transformation that can be done by this initial ascent.

The final ascent implies an irrevocable transformation, integration and sublimation of the whole being of man, consequent upon a series of initial ascents and descents. It consummates the establishment of the entire consciousness of man upon the infinite pedestal of the Knowledge-Will of the Divine. It unites the human consciousness with the divine consciousness in a permanent, integral and dynamic identification. On the sun-bathed heights of the Supermind, the Yogi enjoys at once the invariable bliss of the transcendent Sachchidânanda, and the variable, multifarious delight of the cosmic existence. He walks in the steps of the supreme Truth, and works by the Will of the supreme Force, and wears his humanity as a transparent vesture of the unveiled Divine.

This ascent to the Supermind or the Vijnâna was attempted individually by some of the Vedic Rishis, but there is no record of a collective endeavour for such an ascent; nor was any systematic descent of the Supermind for the transformation of the earth-consciousness envisaged in their aim. But the most outstanding feature of the aim of the Integral Yoga is that it seeks to raise the collective human consciousness into the divine consciousness of the Supermind, and bring the Light and Force of the latter for the transformation and divinisation of the whole nature of man, including even his surface

physical nature and its movements. I shall consider the conditions of this ascent and its implications and results when I come to dwell upon the details of the Integral Yoga.

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND—THE SECOND AIM

We have seen that the ascent to the Supermind has to be achieved by a progressive heightening and expansion of our being and its manifold consciousness, and not by the traditional method of trance. The difficulty of this kind of waking ascent loomed so large before some of the Upanishadic Rishis that they declared that one could not pass through the gates of the Sun (meaning the Supermind or the supreme Gnosis) and yet retain the human body. But Sri Aurobindo asserts that all that is involved here in the Inconscience must necessarily evolve. As Matter, Life and Mind have evolved, so in due and inevitable course, the Supermind too must evolve and become the foundation and governing principle of the human consciousness. We shall live in the supramental consciousness and work with the supramental force, even as we now live in the mental consciousness and work with the mental force. The revolutionary nature of the transition from the mind to the Supermind need not paralyse our aspiration with doubt or distrust, for the transitions from stones or minerals to plants, and from plants to animals, and from animals to our present humanity have not been any the less revolutionary.

But an ascent to the Supermind, however great an achievement it may be, cannot be the end of evolution, which is not only an emergence for ascension, but an emergence for manifestation. If the Superconscient has descended here and masked itself as the Inconscient, if the soul has come down into birth and assumed the nature of ignorance and limitation, it is only to bring down and reveal, in the triple term of the human consciousness, the infinite splendour of the Supreme. Here below the splendour is evolving, there above it is ever unveiled; the evolutionary urge from below is aided and accelerated, first by an intermittent and indirect influence of the splendour above, and next by its direct and transforming descent below. The descent is an invasion of the finite by the Infinite, of the Ignorance by Knowledge, and of darkness and death by Light and Immortality.

The descent of the Supermind into the human mind will transform the latter from a groping and stumbling seeker of knowledge into a crystalline channel of the divine Wisdom. Not by strenuous reasoning on the misleading data of the senses and the dubious output of imagination and inference, but by a direct intuitive vision and an intimate identity will the transformed mind know the truth, and order its faculties in accordance with its rhythm. Its thoughts will be truth-thoughts, its ideas will be shining formations of truth, its discrimination an assured perception of the distinctions of things whose diversity is but a prismatic presentation of the essential

unity, and its imagination a true imaging of the various aspects of truth.

The descent of the Supermind into the human heart will transform all emotions into gleaming waves of bliss, and all feelings into feelings of love and devotion for the Divine in all beings and all things. The relations of life will not be abolished, but become widened and illumined figures of our infinite relations with the Divine, the diverse ways of our meeting and embracing Him in all.

Similarly the descent of the Supermind into the human life will liberate it from all desire and craving, and convert it into an instrument of unlimited force and enjoyment. Unhungering and unattached to anything, it will enjoy the delight of all its movements and all their results. And all its movements will be the unfaltering movements of the divine Will fulfilling itself in the terms of human life.

The body too, transformed by the supramental force, will be released forever from the obscure hold of the Subconscient and the Inconscient, and, based on Light, filled with Light, and moved by Light, become a flexible means of divine action.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN MATTER—THE THIRD AIM

The ascent to the Supermind and the descent of the Supermind lead inevitably to the third aim of the Integral Yoga—the full and unblemished manifestation of the Divine. Though we have called it the third aim, it is, in

fact, the sole aim; but because by manifestation we mean the supramental manifestation and no other, we think we are justified in calling the ascent to the Supermind and the descent of the Supermind the first and second aims respectively. But the three together in an indissoluble unity form the great aim of the Integral Yoga. Manifestation or the divine self-revelation is the key to the riddle of the world. A progressive manifestation starting from the creation of dumb Matter, and culminating in the perfect Epiphany in man is the ultimate sense and significance of terrestrial existence. The soul's wandering from birth to birth and assumption of form after form is a long and complex preparation of its instrumental nature for the perfect manifestation of the Divine. Creation can have no other purpose, the æonic travail of Nature can have no other goal. Delight? But it must be the varied delight of a harmonious self-expression, not the chaotic joy of an aimless drift. Knowledge? But it must be the all-seeing and all-revealing Knowledge which guides with its impeccable Will of Force the developing harmonies of the worlds. This supreme delight and this supreme Knowledge-Will, creative and consummative of the universal movements, are found only in the *vijñāna* or the Supermind, which is the eternal abode of the essential unity of existence, embracing and deploying its eternal multiplicity. Therefore, the supramental manifestation is the crown of terrestrial evolution, and it is this that is the definite aim of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The Creator self-revealed in His supernal splendour in transformed and perfected

human individualities, is the formula of the supramental manifestation.

The foregoing elaboration of the triple aim must have made it clear that it is not any kind of contact or union with the Divine that is regarded by Sri Aurobindo as the ultimate objective of his Integral Yoga. He does not think that the realisation of the immobile, impersonal Brahman is the highest realisation. This impersonal Brahman is at once immanent and transcendent, and can be realised as either, separately or both together; but the highest and widest realisation, what Sri Aurobindo calls integral, is that of the supreme Purusha who unifies in Himself all poises and aspects of His ineffable existence, and is higher than the Immutable, *akṣarādāpicottamaḥ*. A union with the integral Brahman or Purushottama is possible only on the supramental plane, and can be made a constant experience of the whole human being by its integral supramental conversion; and this integral union is the secret of the perfect manifestation of the Divine in Matter. A definite integral aim and a definite integral path are offered to man for the fulfilment of his divine destiny upon earth.

CHAPTER V

THE TRIPLE FOUNDATION

THE triple aim of the Integral Yoga demands a revolutionary start from a basis wider and deeper than that of the traditional Yogas, and with a sanction and equipment unknown, because unnecessary, to them. Since it seeks neither merely the personal salvation of the human soul, nor its self-extinction in the transcendent Absolute, nor any rapt and rapturous union with the Supreme in some Heaven beyond, but a constant, total and dynamic union with the Divine *in life*, it takes care to lay a triple foundation consisting of (1) the call and the response, (2) calm and equality, and (3) surrender, each of which bears a special import and significance, and is indispensable to the effectiveness of the composite beginning; but none by itself is able to achieve any abiding and considerable result. It is only a harmonious combination of these three primary factors that can ensure a more or less unimpeded progress on this long and difficult path of the Integral Yoga.

THE CALL AND THE RESPONSE

The most important initial element of the synthetic advance is the call and the response. By the call we do not mean merely an aspiration for the Divine, or a yearning for

the bliss of the unitive life, but a definite call of our whole being, its unceasing and unflagging invocation to the Supreme to descend into us and manifest His supernal splendour in our life and nature. It is a call for the closest and completest union, but a constantly creative and revelatory union, in our waking state—God's unimpeded self-expression and the perfect fulfilment of His Will in and through our transformed consciousness and being, steeped in the invariable peace and bliss of the essential identity, emergent even on the surface. This call springs from a mystic faith and perception of our inmost being: that the extinction of the individual soul in the unthinkable Eternal is not the end of our birth in terrestrial existence, and that there must be a definite purpose, a deeper intention behind the drag and drift of its ambiguous appearances: a reproduction of the luminous existence, consciousness and bliss of the Supreme in terms of man's mind, soul, life and body. This faith, this irresistible belief in the eventual Apocalypse in Matter, informs the call with its steadfast intensity, and no other spiritual achievement, however high it may be, can fully satisfy those who have once had a glimpse of the unimaginable glory of this consummation. The aspiration of the individuals who have been inspired by this vision must needs, therefore, be different from the aspiration of those who have been following the traditional spiritual urge;—it must be an original, pioneer aspiration lit with a new meaning of creation, and winging towards new, unexplored horizons of an all-unifying Knowledge. The rejection of Nature

for the realisation of the Spirit, and the recoil from life for the wooing of Light seems to this comprehensive aspiration something too narrow and drastic; it insists rather on the reconciliation of Spirit and Nature, Light and life on the highest plane of creative unity. There is something revolutionary in the very grain of this call and aspiration, a bold departure from the beaten track, and the germinal idea of an unprecedented spiritual fulfilment. Born of an assimilation of the highest spiritual aspirations of the past, this call embodies the Time-Spirit of the present, and heralds the great Advent of which the seers have seen visions, and the poets sung in strains of inspired delight.

But it must be "a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below," "an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature."¹ Nothing like it has ever been conceived or attempted before in the past, for at no period of the spiritual history of the world was humanity so athirst and ripe in its elite for being a manifesting channel of Sachchidânanda in the material world, as it is today, in spite of the deepening gloom that envelops it. The call that rises from the earth is a call of the widest and profoundest love, offering itself as a ransom and holocaust for the great Advent.

The call from below is an earnest or, rather, to be more psychologically accurate, a reflex of the call from above.

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo

The truth of the matter is, that it is the divine Will that first flashes down into the dark and dumb secrecies of Matter and awakens there a memory of Light and an aspiration for it. This Will of the Divine is the Will of Love, and the aspiration that rises from below is a resultant of its action. But the first reaction of the awakening soul to the touch of love takes the form of a flight of the alone to the Alone,—an intense, precipitate and all-excluding aspiration for a naked retreat to the Absolute. The soul, turning from what it regards as the “insoluble mystery of birth and the tardy process of mortality,” impatient of the stranglehold of Matter, and tired of the tossings of life, longs to reach its eternal Home of Love and Bliss. But, however intense and insistent this longing may be, it does not exhaust all the potentialities of the soul’s aspiration. The mature soul, unveiling the mystery of life, regards this flight as a defeat and a frustration, and determines to fulfil the divine mission for which it has come down. Its call upon the Supreme is, therefore, a reflex of the call of the Supreme upon it to remember its mission and invoke His descent and manifestation in Matter. The normal spiritual aspiration of the awakened soul for the exclusive enjoyment of the peace and bliss of the Beyond turns in the mature soul, by an absolute renunciation of all personal enjoyment, into an aspiration for the service of the Divine and the perfect fulfilment of His Will to manifestation. A sincere and constant call of the whole being of man is a guarantee of the response of the Divine—a response which

is the seal and sanction of the accomplishment of the soul's mission in its terrestrial existence. In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo this response of the Supreme is the most momentous element, and without it no amount of human endeavour can achieve the great objective of supramental manifestation.

CALM AND EQUALITY

The second strand of the foundation is calm and equality. No Yoga can be based on the quicksand of a restless nature, subject to the assaults of blind desires and emotions and impulses; least of all this Yoga, which demands an immense and immutable foundation for its complex dynamic action. Calm, a state of wide tranquillity, is indispensable to the initial Yogic movement of concentration and introspection. In the other Yogas, calm is established by means of a fixed preparatory discipline of the nature, by *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, etc. or by a progressive renunciation of life and its normal activities, and a detachment of the witness soul from the movements of Nature, so that by an intensive concentration the central consciousness may pass into its own depths or rise to its own heights to realise its divine purity and freedom. For the Integral Yoga this basis of negative calm, acquired by a suppression or a lulling of the lower unrest, is not enough; for, its aim being the transformation and perfection of the whole nature of man, it needs an untrembling foundation of a positive and permanent calm. A negative calm may

well serve as a vaulting board for a leap into the Self or Spirit, but fails as a platform or pedestal for a radical conversion and a new-modelling of nature. Therefore, the initial movement of quiet detachment from the turmoil of nature has to be supplemented by a conscious opening and invocation to the spiritual calm, so that it may descend into us and fill our being with its invulnerable tranquillity. In the beginning of the Yoga, one feels the calm growing in that part of one's being which is most turned to the Light, while the other parts may still be weltering in the habitual disorder and disquiet. One can learn—it comes by a steady will and practice—to live in that island of calm and feel secure against the winds and waves of the encircling ocean. But gradually this calm spreads out and infuses itself into the parts of the nature which have lent themselves to the general work of purification. It is at this stage that a descent from above is most essential, for it not only fortifies the existing calm, but widens it beyond measure, and imparts to it its own spiritual quality of a positive and permanent concreteness. What was being gained and maintained by an unrelaxed labour of effort and vigilance, becomes now a settled and secure possession, capable of upbearing all the rush and swing of the contending forces of light and darkness.

Sri Aurobindo attaches a great importance to this calm, for, according to him, nothing definite and abiding can be achieved without it. He deprecates all impatience and over-eagerness and straining as positively disturbing and impeding, and teaches that “wideness and calmness are

the foundation of the Yogic consciousness and the best condition for inner growth and experience. If a wide calm can be established in the physical consciousness, occupying and filling the very body and all its cells, that can become the basis for its transformation; in fact, without this wideness and calmness the transformation is hardly possible." If the foundation of calm is not there, the descending Light and Power and Ananda will withdraw, leaving the nature to toss and tumble in its heaving obscurity. The long and uphill discipline of the Integral Yoga cannot be carried to its successful conclusion unless there has already been established a serene calm, at least in the central consciousness, as the first achievement of the aspirant. It is only in peace and calm that one can contemplate the object of one's quest with a steady gaze of devotion, and, at the same time, detect the imperfections and impurities of one's nature, and reject them with a firm decision. Calm in the mind, calm in the heart of emotions, calm in the parts of life in which the executive energies have their play, and calm in the very cells of the body—this is what Sri Aurobindo means by calm as an essential element of the foundation of his Yoga of supramental self-transformation.

It is true that in some devotional Yogas in India, as also in some types of devotional mysticism in the West, a considerable premium is put upon over-eagerness and impatience in the spiritual life. Excessive and sloppy emotionalism is made to do duty for a quiet and intense devotion, the steady, white flame of the psychic (soul) which mounts

straight towards God. The inevitable result of this extravagant emotional straining is a loss of poise and balance, which opens the door to the forces of disorder and confusion, on the one hand, and clouds, if it does not altogether destroy, the faculty of inner perception and discrimination, on the other. Much of the criticism and suspicion to which religious or spiritual life is often exposed derives its justification from this want of calm and collected poise in its followers. A calm and confident strength, entirely reliant upon the divine Grace, is the best condition for progress in the spiritual life.

Equality and calm go hand in hand, helping each other. The Gitâ, following the spirit of the Upanishads, insists upon equality as the most essential base of the spiritual life. It even goes to the extent of asserting that equality is Yoga itself, so great is the importance it attaches to this bedrock quality of the soul. Describing equality Sri Aurobindo says, "Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you, but to look at them with a straight look, free from the distortions created by personal feeling, and to try to understand what is behind them, why they happen, what is to be learnt from them, what is it in oneself which they are cast against and what inner profit or progress one can make out of them; it means self-mastery over the vital movements,—anger and sensitiveness and pride as well as desire and the rest,—not to let them get hold of the emotional being and disturb the inner peace, not to speak and act in the

rush and impulsion of these things, always to act and speak out of a calm inner poise of the Spirit.

"Equality means another thing—to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all the mental bias. Personal feeling always distorts and makes one see in men's actions, not only the actions themselves, but things behind them which, more often than not, are not there. Misunderstanding,¹ misjudgment which could have been avoided are the result; things of small consequence assume larger proportions. I have seen that more than half of the untoward happenings of this kind in life are due to this cause....For a sâdhaka, to surmount them and live rather in the calm² strength of the Spirit is an essential part of his progress."¹

Equality in the second sense, as explained by Sri Aurobindo, comes of a clear and constant perception, which deepens into experience, of the one Self or the one Divine everywhere, in all beings and all things. In its perfect state, it is "a calm, impartial and equal self-identification" with all beings and things. One comes to see and feel the one Being gleaming from behind the mask of every form, be it the form of a sage or a sinner,

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 1st Series or *On Yoga II*

of a king or a pauper, of a man, an animal or a plant. It is this state of equality, which the Upanishads describe when they say, "He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?" It is a state of being infinite and universal, liberated from the shackles of the ego. It is to put on Brahmanhood, and confront the world with the calm regard of the Eternal.

But it is not easy to have equality all at once in the beginning of one's Yoga. The whole play of the human nature is based on an inveterate and manifold inequality. The prâna or vital is a whirlpool of desires and passions, it hungers and strains after objects that attract and turn away from those that repel it, exposing itself to the transient reactions of pleasure and pain, joy and grief. In order to establish equality in the prâna, one must cast all desires out of it and train it to be calm and equal to all objects. Since the prâna is essentially an instrument of enjoyment and not of craving, its final perfection will be an equal delight in all objects, and an equal enjoyment of all its contacts with the world. The heart must likewise be rid of the inequalities of attachments and affections, hatred and fear and exultation and wrath and grief, and become wide and sweet and serene, a tranquil ocean of deep and happy spiritual feeling. The mind too must shed all its attachment to its own preferences and prepossessions, its habitual subjection to its own ideas and thoughts and opinions, and see in ignorance "a knowledge which is

imprisoned and seeks and waits for delivery, in error a truth at work which has lost itself or got thrown by the groping mind into misleading forms....It will not hold itself bound and limited by its knowledge or forbidden by it to proceed to fresh illumination, nor lay too fierce a grasp on truth, even when using it to the full, or tyrannously chain it to its present formulations".¹ It must learn to be large and luminously equal to the infiltration and expansion of the Light in it through the intricate and often inscrutable play of darkness and twilight. Since the demand of the Integral Yoga on us is to be equal not only in the soul, but also in the whole of our nature, this preparatory purification will go on progressing till the equality, thus acquired, passes into the spiritual equality, the eternal, unshakable equality of Sachchidânanda Himself, that bases the boundless, multitudinous movement of the universe.

What we have considered so far is the passive or negative equality, which acquiesces in and receives all impacts of the world without betraying the slightest tremor of unquiet or disturbance. There are three ways of developing and establishing it in the nature. The first is the way of endurance, *titikṣhā*, which is the way of the heroic or stoical will bearing down and crushing all reactions of dualities, and remaining firm and unmoved in the face of all opposition. The second is the way of indifference, *udāsīnatā*, which is the way of the philosophic intellect,

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo or *On Yoga* I

detaching itself from the whirl of the lower energies and regarding them, with the eye of knowledge, as born of the ignorance or illusion of nature. The impartial indifference remains equal and impervious to all the shocks and surprises of life—a calm witness, silent and impassive, and unassailable in its impassiveness. The third way is that of the Christian or Vaishnavic submission, *namas* or *nati*, a devoted resignation to the will of God, and a quiet acceptance of all that comes,—happiness or suffering, honour or obloquy, victory or defeat, success or failure,—as the just dispensation of divine Providence.

But this passive equality, though an indispensable preliminary, is not enough for the basic perfection of the Integral Yoga; for, it is not a mere inhibition of the natural movements that is aimed at in it, but a conquest and conversion of them, a radical transformation. Therefore, to the still peace of the passive equality has to be added the thrilled delight, the boundless *Ânanda* of the positive and active equality which, armed with the power of Spirit, returns upon the nature and its movements to subject and attune them to the divine Will, and transmute them into a limpid and docile channel of its self-expression in the material world. The final perfection of equality will be an imperturbable vastness in the being, sustaining the rapturous dynamism of a harmonised and integrated nature for the outpouring of the splendours of the Divine in human life.

SURRENDER

The third element of the foundation of the Integral Yoga is surrender. Usually all Yogas are practised by one of the three means: (1) personal effort and tapasya,¹ (2) personal tapasya aided and fortified by the divine Grace, and (3) the direct working of the divine Grace and Force. The last means is that which Sri Aurobindo advises the followers of the Integral Yoga to avail themselves of, because it is the only means by which the great objective of the supramental transformation can be achieved. In this Yoga personal effort is used only at the initial stages, and that, too, not for any pre-planned purification or progress, but solely with a view to making the surrender complete and constant, which, of course, involves a considerable purification. The tapasyâ of the egoistic individual lies simply in resolutely willing and compassing its own abdication, its utter effacement, in favour of the true individual, the soul, and its eternal Master, the Divine. Each part of the complex human nature, each movement of its thought and feeling and emotion and sensation and action, has to be surrendered and offered at every moment of life, so that disinherited and dispossessed, the ego may disappear altogether, and the Divine take up the charge of the whole being and lead it to the perfect fulfilment of its destiny. It must be clearly understood here that the Integral Yoga, whose only aim is the trans-

¹ Askesis or austerities

formation of the entire nature of man, and the unflawed manifestation of Sachchidânanda in his life, cannot be practised by the normal or supernormal powers of his mind and heart. The path is so steep and long, it winds through so many virgin valleys and rugged rocks, and is beset with so many banded forces of darkness that, except for the direct divine leading at every step, which a sincere call and an integral surrender cannot fail to ensure, the goal could hardly be realised. Besides, the goal itself is something not only beyond the highest conception of the human intelligence, but beyond the highest reach of human powers; it can be attained only if the supreme divine Light consents to descend and lift man into its own domain. In the integral Yoga, it is the Divine who is the Sâdhaka and the Siddha, the Guide and the Goal; but in order that His constant guidance may be available, it is imperative that the surrender of the aspirant should be ungrudging, unreserved, integral and absolute; and it must be a surrender to the supreme Consciousness-Force of the Divine, the eternal Mahâshakti, the supreme Mother.

We have now to proceed to consider who this Mother, the sole Pilot of the Integral Yoga, is, and how best we can surrender all ourself to Her transforming Love.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOTHER IN HER TRIPLE POISE

SRI Râmakrishna expressed one of the cardinal truths of the integral spiritual realisation when he said that it is the Mother who holds the key to the abode of Brahman, and unless She delivered it as a Grace, none could see Brahman face to face. Sri Râmakrishna's own self-consecration to the Mother was unimpeachable and inviolate to the last day of his life, in spite of his Vedântic initiation and the definitive Vedântic experience of the supreme status of the undifferentiated Absolute. Vaishnava, Tântic, Vedântic, Christian, Moslem, all in one, he remained the Mother's child, divinely free in his unquestioning reliance upon Her guidance, and, therefore, intuitively impeccable in all his movements. It was this fact of the absolute reliance of such a spiritual stalwart on the Grace and guidance of the Mother, which startled, baffled, and at last conquered the orthodox Vedântin, Totâpuri, who, in the inflexible pride of his exclusive monism, had dared to deny and even deride the great Mother. Besides his child-like dependence on the Mother, Sri Râmakrishna's idolatry, his worship of her clay image, not only as a preliminary means to spiritual progress, but even as an indispensable element of the crowning expression of his God-drunk state and highest illumination, flashes a

mysterious hint, a bare but very significant suggestion, of a certain truth which will be apparent to us as we proceed in our consideration of the objectification and individualisation of the Mother's Presence for a radical transformation of our active nature.

The Mother, whom Sri Râmakrishna adored and called Kâli, is the supreme Shakti, at once transcendent and universal, who, as the Consciousness-Force of Brahman, creates, constitutes and upholds the worlds by the illimitable might of Her Will and Power, and guides them through various phases of inevitable construction and destruction towards the goal of perfection which She, in Her infinite Love and Knowledge, has decreed for them. She was worshipped by the Vedic seers as Aditi, by the Tântrics as Adyâshakti and Mahâshakti, and traces of her worship are found in the fading memories of the Babylonian, Egyptian, Assyrian and Chinese traditions of the Mother-cult, or the creative feminine principle. Sri Râmakrishna's combination of the Vedânta and the Tantra was a prophetic achievement of supreme importance;—it was, in truth, a combination of the Absolute and the cosmic manifestation, of Heaven and Earth, of Spirit and Matter.

Is this transcendent and universal Shakti the Mother to whom we are called upon to surrender? Is She the sole pilot of the Integral Yoga? Were it only so, our Yoga would be identical with the Tânttric Yoga, and robbed of much of its integrality and characteristic potentiality for physical transformation and divine manifestation;

for, the transcendent and universal Mother, as envisaged by Tantra, can release the soul from the bonds of the lower nature and bestow upon it either the status of a masterful universality or of a featureless infinity in the Transcendent; but a divine fulfilment in the terrestrial existence by the transfiguration of even the surface physical being of man, and a conquest and conversion of Matter itself is a consummation which demands something more than these two clear-cut poises of the Mother—another and more directly and concretely dynamic poise and power in which She can canalise her victorious Force into the material world and compel and quicken the irresistible germination of a divine race in humanity. It is a poise in the dissolving darkness of the world for the planting of Her highest regenerative and transformative Light, the poise of a special Power for a new creation and a renovation and remoulding of the entire being of man. Unless She assumes upon Herself the discords and disabilities of the material life, and descends into the blind abyss of its inconscient origin, Her divine Light cannot grow and glow in this dim waste of terrestrial existence. If the transcendent and universal poises could effect all decisive changes and revolutionary departures in the life of humanity, there would be no need of the Avatar; but that is not how the Mother deals with the evolutionary life of Her children. As the transcendent Shakti, She bears the fiat of the Absolute, as the universal Mahâshakti She ploughs and prepares the ground for the working out of the fiat, and by a direct descent and

embodiment, She puts on a divine individuality and becomes the focal point of the fructifying fiat, so that the initial step of the intended departure may be securely and irrevocably taken, and a definite direction and lead given to the Godward Odyssey of mankind. Her individual poise in the material world is an imperative demand of the logic of physical transformation and divine life. Besides, the aim of the Integral Yoga being the supramental fulfilment of the Divine in man, the infusion of the supramental principle into Matter and the eventual conversion of the material life into the supramental life, are a work of such immense and intricate difficulties that even the most mighty and daring human effort, though aided and fortified by the universal and transcendent Mother, is powerless to achieve it. The transcendent and universal Mother must come down into the darkness of the material existence, assume a human form, identify Herself with the earth and her children, and, slowly but steadily, leaven them with Her supramental Light and Force. The inauguration of the reign of the Supermind in Matter cannot be done by the mental man, however high his soul may have soared in the realms of Spirit. It is the incarnate individuality of the Supreme Mother that alone can "tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda."¹

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

THE TRANSCENDENT POISE

In the supreme Purusha the Mother is, as Chit or Parâsamvit,¹ wrapt in an indistinguishable union with Her eternal Consort. Holding infinite potentialities in Herself, she is plunged in the ineffable bliss of Her undifferentiated existence. There is no creation there, not the slightest ripple or vibration of any self-expanding Force;—all is in-gathered, mute, still. Even to speak of Her as the Mother is to speak in terms of a later development, to apply an anticipatory epithet. The Mother's highest poise, as we can conceive it, is where She stands, in the timeless silence of the unitary existence, as the luminous link between the unmanifest Absolute and the multitudinous manifestation. She is there as the original, infinite Consciousness-Force, Chit-shakti, bearing in Herself the Supreme Divine as the eternal Sachchidânanda, and bringing out of Him, in an impeccable harmony of descending hierarchies, the Powers and Principles that sway the varying rhythms and patterns of manifestation and creation. Majestic and august She stands, above Time and Space, above all unity and multiplicity, above the Gods and their orchestral movements, releasing out of the unfathomable abyss of the ultimate Being the infinite possibilities of His self-formulation and self-expression. She is the Matrix and Mother of all that exists in the universe and beyond it, decreeing all that takes place here and elsewhere.

¹ Transcendent Consciousness

THE UNIVERSAL POISE

The universal Mother, Mahâshakti, stands over the worlds, which She projects out of Herself, and dominates and directs all their complex play of manifesting forces. She is concerned with the perfect working out of whatever is transmitted to Her by Her transcendent consciousness from the Absolute. With the assistance of Her emanations that prepare or preside over the large lines of the universal action, She governs the multitudinous movements of the world by the rigour and rectitude of Her Laws. The mechanical Nature with which we are all familiar, the aspect of Prakriti, is only the lower executive form of this cosmic Mahâshakti. Above the nature of the three gunas or essential modes of terrestrial existence, She moves in the freedom of Her spiritual infinitudes and creates and destroys in the steps of an unfaltering knowledge. Constituting yet transcending Prakriti, She determines and over-rules all her operations, all the involved interminglings of her gunas. Her unlimited vision embraces in its sweep at once the ultimate objectives of creation and the minute details of the working of every force and energy, every rule or rhythm; and Her unsleeping Power keeps the cosmic play in a perpetual progressive motion, and prevents it from tumbling into disintegrating chaos.

“But there are many planes of Her creation, many steps of the Divine Shakti. At the summit of this manifestation of which we are a part, there are worlds of infinite

existence, consciousness, force and bliss over which the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal Power. All beings there live and move in an ineffable completeness and unalterable oneness, because She carries them safe in Her arms for ever. Nearer to us are the worlds of a perfect supramental creation in which the Mother is the supramental Mahâshakti, a Power of divine omniscient Will and omnipotent Knowledge always apparent in its un-failing works and spontaneously perfect in every process. There all movements are the steps of the Truth; there all beings are souls and powers and bodies of the divine Light; there all experiences are seas and floods and waves of an intense and absolute Ananda."¹

The supramental Mahâshakti has manifested four of Her great aspects in Her governance and guidance of our terrestrial existence: one is Her aspect of Maheshwari, another of Mahâkâli, the third of Mahâlaksmi and the fourth of Mahâsaraswati.² They correspond more or less approximately to the four aspects of Nârâyana as described in the Vaishnava Pancharâtra—Vâsudeva, Shankarshan, Pradyumna and Aniruddha—and can be said to be the primal differentiating terms of the four Varnas or four basic types of human temperament, Brâhmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. It is a harmonious establishment of these four aspects of the Supramental Mother in a human being that constitutes the integral perfection, and is an

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

² For further details refer to *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

essential condition of the divine life in the material world. Maheshwari with her all-illuminating and all-commanding splendour of knowledge, Mahākālī with her thunders and lightnings of force, Mahālakshmi with her enthralling and exalting grace and harmony, and Mahāsaraswati with her perfection of organisation and execution and her faultless mastery of the science and craft and technique of things, found in man the creative fulness of the divine Nature. There are other and higher aspects of the cosmic Mahāshakti, but they have not yet stood out and manifested themselves in the terrestrial play; only when the above four have installed themselves in the transformed human nature can they manifest and become dynamic here.

It will have become clear from the above consideration that Sri Aurobindo's conception of the universal Mahāshakti and Her principal dynamic aspects and their descent and revelation in man, is characterised by a limpid definiteness, which replaces the usual vagueness and confusion attaching to them, and turns them into distinct, tangible realities, indispensable to the perfection of the Integral Yoga. Each aspect represents an essential truth of our being, a potential truth of our seeking, and a concrete truth of our ultimate becoming; and all have to be seized and harmonised in an ascending and descending experience, which culminates in the transmutation of the lower nature (Aparā Prakriti) into the higher (Parā Prakriti). This transmutation is the crux of the whole process of the Integral Yoga and the very pivot of its final

aim; and the significance of the absolute surrender to the Mother in Her triple poise comes out clearly as we follow the steps of this radical transmutation. For, who else except the Divine Mother can effect this change of the lower into the higher nature, bestowing upon man the double freedom of self-expression—the freedom of the soul and the freedom of the converted and divinised nature?

THE INDIVIDUAL POISE

The most immediately effective and mysteriously transfiguring poise of the Mother is in Her incarnate individuality. In Her universal poise, She acts according to the cosmic Law of Her own creation;—She lays down the lines, marshals Her energies, develops the stages, and leads all things and beings according to their natures to their destined goals; but the exceptional departures, the new original possibilities proceed from the Transcendent, and it is the individual poise of the Mother which, representing the Transcendent, becomes the sole channel of those possibilities as well as of the Will and Grace realising them here. But for this individual embodiment, the transcendent Will could hardly find a direct means of completely fulfilling itself in the material world. The embodied physical action of the individual poise of the Mother is a constant opportunity to our embodied being to approach and contact the divine Grace, and accelerate the pace of our evolution into our dynamic divinity.

The individual divine Mother, at once transcendent and universal in Her consciousness, brings down the transcendent Will to new creation, and infuses it into those individual units of humanity who open and surrender to Her in an unquenchable aspiration for becoming Her instruments upon earth.

In the age in which we live, the Will of the Transcendent is, as Sri Aurobindo assures us, the manifestation of the supramental Divine in the material world. The individuality of the Mother, though in full possession of Her transcendence and universality, is the living medium of the supramental Force and Light put out in front for the supramental creation and fulfilment in mankind. The key to the highest spiritual achievement of the modern age is, therefore, in the hands of the Mother, and to be able to receive Her Grace is to qualify for a share in the glory of that consummation.

This brings us to the question of the Avatarhood of God. Each epoch of a crucial turning in the life of humanity is graced by a definite Presence and Power of the Divine, which represents, so to say, the pith and peak of the aim to be realised, the work to be accomplished. That which decrees the specific achievement—and it is always the Will of the Transcendent that does it—descends here into a mortal tenement to initiate the work, to furrow the virgin field and sow the golden seed, so that a new era may be ushered in and new possibilities may press towards realisation. Each incarnation has a particular mission to pioneer, and though all incarnations are identical in

their origin and essence,—for they are the Transcendent in individual human forms and conscious of their divine Self,—each demands an absolute allegiance and loyalty of his contemporaries for the fulfilment of his particular work in the world.¹ It will not do to be exclusively attached to Rama in the age of Krishna, for, though Rama and Krishna are the same in essence, each represents a definite, specific work, God's own work, which can be accomplished only if the mind and heart of his age turn devotedly to him and his ideal. This does not mean a scrapping of the other Avatars, but a whole-hearted surrender to the present one, along with a general adoration of all. Of course, if the aim is to escape out of the world of ignorance and suffering into some beatific Beyond, or unite with the Divine in His supracosmic transcendence, the worship of any Avatar is as effective as that of any other; but if the aim is to fulfil the special Will of the Divine in the age to which one belongs, an ungrudging dynamic surrender to the Avatar of that age is the best way to help God's work and further that of all Avatars into the bargain. If there were no truth in the particularity of the Avatar's mission, the very fact of Avatarhood would lose all significance, or one Avatar would be enough for all ages to come.

The individual embodiment of the Mother is the face and front of the Transcendent walking the earth for its

¹ Compare the words of Jesus Christ, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

deliverance and transformation. It is an embodiment, instinct with the force and radiant with the glory of the Supreme, on the one hand, and stamped with the utmost sacrifice of a redeeming love and compassion, on the other. Who else could have entered, except the Mother, into the unplumbed depths of the Inconscient, touched with Her finger, "the horror of the falsehood", and consented to work in that "supreme obscurity", so that the divine Light might be kindled even there, and evolution proceed not from nescience, but from consciousness to greater consciousness, trailing joy and freedom and harmony to their highest perfection? "Thou plungest me, O Lord, into the most opaque darkness; it must be then because Thou hast so firmly established Thy light in me that Thou knowest it will stand the perilous test. Hast Thou chosen me for descending into the vortex of this hell as Thy torch-bearer?"¹ Such was the prayer the Mother sent up to the Divine from the "vortex of the hell" into which she had descended, and the reply of the Divine rang out clear and categoric: "I have chosen thee from all eternity to be my exceptional representative upon the earth, not in an invisible and hidden way, but in a way apparent to the eyes of all men. And what thou wert created to be, thou shalt be."² "Fight that thou mayst conquer and triumph; struggle to surmount all that has been up to this day, to make the new Light emerge,

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*

² *ibid.*

the new example, which the world needs. Fight stubbornly against all obstacles, outer or inner. This is the pearl without price which is proposed for thee to realise.”¹ Even so far back as 1915, the Mother knew, not only in the depths of Her being, where She has been fully awake ever since Her early childhood, but in the outer physical being, that “Thy will is that from the heart of this heavy and obscure Matter I must let loose the volcano of Thy Love and Light. It is Thy will that, breaking all old conventions of language, there must arise the right Word to express Thee, the Word that never was heard before; it is Thy will that the integral union should be made between the smallest things below and the sublimest and most vast above; and that is why, O Lord, cutting me off from all religious joy and spiritual ecstasy, depriving me of all freedom to concentrate exclusively on Thee, Thou hast said to me, ‘Work as an ordinary man in the midst of ordinary beings; learn to be nothing more than they are in all that is manifesting; associate with the integral way of their being; for, beyond all that they know, all that they are, thou carriest in thyself the torch of the integral splendour which does not waver, and by associating with them, it is this thou wilt carry into their midst.’”²

This is the work which the Divine Mother has to do upon earth in Her individual poise, a work of inconceivable

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*

² *ibid.*

labour and toil, carried on from day to day in the teeth of the direst opposition from the forces of darkness, and the indifference or cold scepticism even of those for whose liberation and perfection She toils. Those who have lived at Her feet know what it means for Her, an image of immaculate purity and eternal bliss, to live in the stinking cess-pool of human desires and lusts and passions, surrounded by suffering and obscurity and ugliness, pelted by perversity and stabbed by falsehood—to live in association with greed and treachery and ingratitude, so that little by little, by the irresistible power of Her transforming Love, She may turn the cess-pool into a crystal stream of heavenly waters, and, delivering man from the yoke of ignorance and cleansing him of all impurities, transfer him into the arms of the Divine. And yet those who know Her, know nothing of the work She has been doing, behind the veil, deep in the pit, far in the backwoods, where the aboriginal appetites of the animal man seethe and surge, and the stark inertia and insensibility of Matter hold an undisputed sway. None can measure the patience, the loving solicitude, the unwearied forbearance, and the calm, clairvoyant certitude with which She has been transmuting the subterranean bases of human existence and nature in order that one day man may grow unimpeded into his regal godhead and the face of the earth beam with the beauty and bliss of the Divine.

The supreme Mother in Her individual poise is closest and easiest of access to our physical being, whose transformation and conversion is the most important condi-

tion of supramental manifestation. In the Integral Yoga, no spiritual experience counts for much unless it is translated into the terms of the physical being, and rivetted and revealed in the outer nature and action. The Mother's physical Presence and contact, surcharged with the supramental Light and Force, and Her constant control and guidance, elimination of evil and dispensation of Grace, are a guarantee of the ultimate victory of Spirit over Matter; for who can resist the Power of Her to whom the Divine has said, "Art thou not myself crystallised for my work?"¹ "The Divine has to put on humanity in order that the human being may rise to the Divine."²

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*

² *Letters on the Mother by Sri Aurobindo.*

CHAPTER VII

THE INTEGRAL SURRENDER

PART I

THE BACKGROUND

THE essential truth which informs the concept of the Integral surrender is a triple postulate: That the Divine is the omnipresent Reality, the sole all-constituting and all-transcending Being, whose progressive self-manifestation in Matter is the goal of evolutionary terrestrial Nature; that it is the supreme Consciousness-Force of this Being, or rather the Being Himself as Consciousness-Force or Shakti, the *Magna Mater*, or the *Megale Dunamis* of the Gnostics, that has woven out of Himself this immense and intricate web of the worlds; and that it is the omniscient Will of the Shakti, and not any Chance or caprice of an inconscient Force or Energy, that moves the entire universe of its own creation and acts in and through all creatures and things and happenings. Once we admit this triple truth, we are on the way to appreciating the significance of the integral surrender in the Integral Yoga. For, if there is one conscious Shakti, the transcendent and universal Mother, everywhere, in all Her self-formations, organic and inorganic, and if it is Her Will that, covertly or overtly, initiates,

inspires and influences all action, and works itself out through the tangled combinations and oppositions of a myriad elements; if it is She who, invisible to our mortal sight and unacknowledged by our mental ignorance, is the Soul of our soul (*parāprakṛtirjīvabhūtā*) and the Life of our life (*prāṇasyedam vaśe sarvam* or *prāṇaḥ prajānām*), then a glad and loving self-surrender to Her Power is the best way to realise our unity with the Divine and fulfil our destiny in the world. It is not merely the faith and emotion of our heart that induce this surrender, but our reason too, when it overcomes the witchery of the senses and the enslaving lure of the material objects and interests, dictates it as the sole means of the utmost fulfilment of our whole being.

An enlightened intelligence cannot remain tethered to the brute facts of the material world, and impervious to the call of Spirit. With his vision unbarred, his imagination unclamped, and his sensibilities sharpened and subtilised, man, following the secret law of his evolution, which is a law of continuous self-transcendence, must look up beyond the boundaries of his mind and extend his exploration into the domains of Spirit with as much faith and courage as he commands in his intrepid and untiring exploration of the fields of Matter. He must realise that his scientific scepticism is another name for the fanaticism of the materialist, a perverse refusal to see the subtler truths of existence and know the abiding law and essence of his being. A spiritual awakening will widen his consciousness, develop many

faculties which lie dormant in him, and advance him a step beyond Bergson, where he will perceive the one *Elan*, not only vital, but also physical, mental and spiritual,—the one, indivisible, conscious Force, deploying its manifoldness and diversity on the basis of its inalienable unity; and, realising that all-creating and all-constituting Force as the universal Mother, surrender himself to Her, so that undeflected by the fickle desires and unhampered by the preferences and hesitancies of his ego, his being may blossom, with the same spontaneity as the flower blossoms, under the fostering love and care of Her all-pervading Presence. His surrender to the Mother would then be as natural a movement as the surrender of the wave to the sea,—the microcosm will participate in the freedom and sovereignty of the macrocosm. A further step will lead him from the universal to the transcendent Mother, in whose arms of unebbing Love he will find his eternal rest, even while, united with Her universal aspect, he lives an immortal's life on earth, fulfilling Her Will and manifesting the Divine. What appears utopian and impossible to his imprisoned mental ego will one day appear natural and inevitable to his liberated consciousness. To know that his atomic being is generated, sustained and led to its evolutionary perfection by the omnipresent plenum of the Mother's living Presence, and to surrender all himself with an unstinted joy and generosity to Her Force, which is at once Light and Love, is man's deliverance, and his first decisive step towards knowledge.

THE TRIPLE SURRENDER

Man is composed of body, life, soul and mind. Of these four components, the soul, which is made of the Love and Delight of the Supreme, is eternally surrendered to Him. Nothing can wean it from Him, nothing can seduce it into the devious ways of ignorance. It has no desire and no ego; and it does not react with pleasure or pain to the dualities of the world. It is only the triple nature of mind, life and body that, grouped round and manipulated by the ego, is attached to the shifting surfaces of existence and self-insulated from Spirit, its infinite source and sustenance. Unaware of his soul and the Divine dwelling within it, and identified with the mobile mechanism of his triple nature, man feels himself a separate being, set in the midst of other separate beings and forces, to carve out his own career as best he can by a series of clashes and compromises. He does not suspect that his egoistic individuality, asserting its separate existence and pluming itself upon its free will, is an ignorant tool of Nature, and that all its vaunted endowments of intelligence and independence of judgment, conscience and ethical instincts, are but instrumental gifts controlled and directed from behind and above by the one universal Shakti of whom it is only an expressive medium. This triple nature of mind, life and body has to be surrendered to the Mother to whom it really belongs, for it is only by surrender to the infinite, all-knowing Force of the Mother that it can be cured of its egoistic

distortions and led to its highest possible perfection and fulfilment. Surrender will not diminish or impoverish it, rather it will enlarge and enrich it beyond any conceivable measure.

THE SURRENDER OF THE MIND

The secret sense of evolution being the full and perfect emergence of the Divine in the human individual, the motor means of achieving it is a progressive self-transcendence by the double power of aspiration and renunciation. The consciousness of the individual must aspire for the highest it can conceive and imagine, and, at the same time, always renounce its attachment to what it has already acquired. No self-transcendence is possible without a combined working of these two powers. If we do not stretch to infinity, we remain cribbed in the finite; and if we do not leave the plains, we cannot rise to the peaks. Aspiration without renunciation is an idle imagining, and renunciation without aspiration is a joyless self-denial. Therefore the two powers must be harnessed together to effect the utmost self-transcendence of our being.

Philosophers, scientists and thinkers in general attain to an intellectual eminence by the same double process of aspiration and renunciation. If they remained pre-occupied with physical interests, like the unenlightened portion of humanity, or fully lent themselves to the drive of vital desires and the ambition for vital success and satis-

faction, their ascent to the intellectual heights would have been impossible. An increasing renunciation of the lower pleasures and pursuits and a steady uplook have crowned them with intellectual glory. But even the highest mental eminence is a dim plateau which commands no direct view of Truth. What we have arrived at by strenuous mental strivings is not knowledge, but, at best, some shadowy figures and fragments of knowledge, some aspects of Truth torn from their harmonious unity and fringed with the nimbus of our minds. There is no knowledge in the mind but is harassed by doubt and challenged by fresh discoveries—we seem to be moving from hypothesis to hypothesis, speculating, imagining, conjecturing, experimenting, but never getting at any assured, incontrovertible truth, any final solution of the problems of life.

What is the remedy? The same as we employed, though subconsciously, at the past crucial stages of our evolution—the renunciation of our attachment to what we possess and cherish, and an aspiration for something higher and wider. If we are sincerely convinced of the inherent limitations of the human mind and its inability to lead us to Truth, we must cease to glorify it, and, renouncing our exclusive reliance on it and obsession with its pursuits, aspire for an ascent to the next higher plane of consciousness. A keenly felt discontent with mental limitations will open new doors upon the infinite and advance us a step further on our journey to Truth; for, surely it is incredible that after so much evolutionary

progress and promise of perfection, we should have to stop short at a half-result and continue fumbling for ever in the twilight of the mind. But there is always a limit to the mind's own power of self-transcendence, which necessitates a surrender to the infinite divine Force of the Mother.

In the Integral Yoga, the mind is not sought to be forcibly silenced or suppressed, as is done in some of the other Yogas, notably in Râja Yoga. The aim of the Integral Yoga being a dynamic union, not only of the soul but of every part of its terrestrial nature, with the Divine, and a resultant perfection and fulfilment of the whole being of man, neither mind, nor life, nor body is coerced or atrophied, or left out in the cold shade of a righteous neglect. Each part, each fibre of our complex nature has a divine origin, and a divine right to exist and grow, and an indispensable, legitimate use in the service of God in the world. The surrender of the mind, therefore, means, in the Integral Yoga, a surrender of all its faculties and functions into the hands of the divine Mother, so that She may, in Her inscrutable but infallible way, purify and transform them, and render them potent instruments for the reception and transmission of Knowledge.

The mind is derived from the Supermind, the dynamic Truth-Consciousness of the Infinite; but in the evolutionary ignorance of the human consciousness, it seems to be cut off from its source—though, in reality, it is not,—and works as a dividing and differentiating instrument. It commands no vision of the Infinite, no

perception of the indivisible unity and totality. It deals with each object as if it were a separate unit having relations, but no identity, with the rest. Its characteristic action is to divide and depiece, to segregate and aggregate, to analyse and synthesise, but always on the basis of a separative ignorance; and it is, therefore, constitutionally incapable of arriving at the truth of existence, which is a truth of unity and totality. In life it is an agent of organisation and action, but a lame and limited agent, organising and acting in the shadow of its seeking ignorance, and not in the self-existent light of knowledge. I propose to go into greater details of the nature of the human mind and the transformation it has to undergo in the Integral Yoga in a subsequent part of this exposition. Suffice it to say here that, unless the mind surrenders and the human consciousness transcends it, there can be no attainment of knowledge and no satisfactory solution of the problems of life. Aspiration and renunciation must proceed hand in hand on the firm basis of a total surrender.

What is actually meant by the surrender of the mind? With an intense and constant aspiration, the mind must turn all its thoughts to the divine Mother, so that the loving intensity of the turning may bring about an automatic concentration of its energies and a consequent freedom from its wonted distraction and confusion. Concentration on the Divine will bring into it peace and serenity, silence and harmony—a state of intent and tranquil receptivity to the descending Light of the Mother.

This aspiring concentration should be accompanied and fortified by a renunciation of the mind's attachments, and a complete rejection of its "ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind"¹ Our thoughts, ideas, judgements, all depend upon the perspective and angle of vision we take in our regard of ourselves and others; and the angle of vision depends, in its turn, upon the poise of our consciousness. If the poise changes, as it not unoften does, our whole mental outlook and inlook change; our thoughts, ideas and opinions begin to assume a different complexion and run on different lines. This is a common enough experience, illustrated in the lives of many great men, such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Luther, and Kant (among the Westerners); and Vâlmiki, Tulsidâs, Vivekânanda, to name only a few, among the Indians. This proves that there is nothing permanent and sacrosanct about our mental structures, which are but ephemeral things, constructed out of a medley of passing physical and psychological elements. In the Integral Yoga, all such vamped up structures have to be pulled down, the accumulated cobwebs to be swept away, and the emptied mind, like an empty vessel, has to be held up for the Mother's Light to fill it. It is an extremely difficult work for the modern intellectual man to do: to cast away his cherished thoughts and ideas, his views and convictions, his predilections

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

and prepossessions, his mental principles and rules, and become, as Sri Râmakrishna became, a simple child of the Mother, open only to Her inspiration and intuition.

But if one could do that, the result would be what it has always been in the case of all sincere spiritual seekers—a marvellous shower of intuitive knowledge, untainted by personal bias, and sparkingly spontaneous in its revelation and action. Knowledge sits enthroned beyond the leapings and circlings of the human intellect, and manifests itself only to the mind that has surrendered to it with aspiration and renunciation. The knowledge that speaks in the Vedas and the Upanishads, in the Avesta and the Bible, and in the utterances of the mystics, is a supra-intellectual knowledge, not born of reason and reflection, but self-revealed to the silent and surrendered mind; and it is this knowledge that is instinct with Truth, and not what we call knowledge in the pretentious ignorance of our struggling mind. In the Integral Yoga, the surrender of the mind as, indeed, of every other part of our nature, has to be dynamic, and not merely passive. It must be a surrender for sublimation, integration and a radical and total transformation, and not only for a stillness and passivity through which the consciousness may pass out of the mind into some kind of trance or absorbed union with the Eternal. Each faculty of the mind—imagination, perception, reasoning, discrimination, penetration, judgement, must be directly intuivised, and finally linked to and worked by the Supramental Light. Mind, the alienated and diminished

delegate of the Supermind, must be transformed into a luminous and powerful vehicle of the supramental Truth-Consciousness, and an efficient organiser and active agent for the establishment and consolidation of the Life Divine on earth.

THE SURRENDER OF THE VITAL (PRANA)

The surrender of the vital or *prāṇa* means, first and foremost, the surrender of all desires. At the very heart of life, the egoistic, separative life as is lived by man, there is a hard knot of desire, formed of many strands that are connected with each part of our being. Each motive, each impulse, each action of our life, if it is dispassionately scrutinised, will be found to be shot through with the threads of desire, whether it assumes physical forms, vital forms or mental. In the body it manifests as hunger and thirst, which engross and enslave our physical consciousness; and in the vital it manifests as turbulent lusts and passions, clamorous cravings and insatiate ambitions, that toss and torment our being and goad us into all sorts of actions, most of which entail considerable struggle and suffering. This heady rajasic wine is not only useful, but indispensable, at a particular stage of evolution, when the being is enveloped in the *tamas* (inertia) of Matter and needs to be shaken up and vitalised; but once that stage is passed, and a decisive step forward is taken towards the relative equi-

poise of Sattwa,¹ and, especially, when the being is awaking to its spiritual possibilities, the bondage of desire is the most hampering bondage possible. Because of it, life, which should be a tidal flow towards the deathless Light, drifts and dissipates itself, or meanders in fruitless mazes. Because of it, the universal Will, which is behind, and of which desire is a dark and distorted reflection, remains veiled, and man runs hungering after transient pleasures and finds himself overtaken by recurrent suffering. This vital being has to be completely surrendered and irrevocably consecrated, and its desires persistently discouraged and repelled, so that they may ultimately fade away from the nature, leaving the one universal Will to fulfil itself in human life.

Here, too,, we must remember, the object is not the repression and killing of the vital (*prāṇa*), but its purification and transformation. The vital being is the centre of force, and an indispensable instrument for life-effectuation; without it nothing can be achieved in life, whatever may be the power and potentialities of the ideas and visions of the mind. It is the warrior, the executive agent, the intrepid adventurer; and it is also the enjoyer in man. It is made for possession and enjoyment. Its repression, mutilation or neglect—so common in ascetic spirituality—is a fatal folly, for it is nothing short of depriving God of the means of conquest and enjoyment in the material world. Purified of desire, the *prāṇa* becomes a potent

¹ Nature's qualitative mode of enlightened poise and happiness

instrument in the hands of the Mother, and capable of universal enjoyment. But, let us repeat, it must be totally surrendered to the Mother, and the rejection of its ignorant movements must be uncompromising and unreserved. "Rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large strong and consecrated vital being."¹ If this constant harasser of man's God-ward endeavour is once conquered and converted, life becomes a triumphal march towards Light and Bliss and immortality, a march ringing with paeans to the self-fulfilling Will of the Divine.

THE SURRENDER OF THE BODY

The surrender of the body means a surrender of all its movements to the divine Mother. It will not do, in the Integral Yoga, to reduce the action of the body to a minimum and limit it only to the bare maintenance of the physical frame, or to social or humanitarian beneficence, or to the performance of some prescribed religious duties. Since the Integral Yoga accepts the whole of life, it accepts all its multitudinous action and play of energy, not for the personal profit or egoistic satisfaction of the individual, but for the fulfilment of the divine Will,

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

which is a Will to endless creation for self-expression. To do action for the satisfaction of one's own desires, physical, vital or mental, is to remain attached and fettered to action, and perpetuate the life of ignorance and suffering. To renounce action is to non-co-operate with God in His self-manifestation. To do all action, first as an offering to the Mother without any hankering after its result,—selflessly and dispassionately—and then to renounce the egoism of the doer, even of the selfless doer, and let the Force of the Mother initiate and carry on all action, is the sovereign Yogic way. Each movement of the body,—walking, speaking, reading, eating, working, playing,—has to be severally offered, so that no energy of the physical being may remain entangled in the desires and preferences of the ego, but all are surrendered to and controlled by the Mother. “When you can thus gather all your movements into the One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of you given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary ways, engrossed in ordinary things; your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realised in you.”¹

But along with this aspiring surrender of the body and its actions, there must go a thorough rejection of the “physical nature’s stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, t mas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda

¹ *The Words of the Mother.*

may establish itself in a body growing always more divine..."¹ We shall see, when we come to consider the supramental transformation of the body, how, through surrender to the Mother's Power, it is changed from a dense and impeding clod into a transparent temple of the manifest Divine. Work which, in the beginning of the Yoga, is a prayer of the body to the Divine, becomes in the end the prism of His Victorious Power.

What the Integral Yoga aims to achieve, is not only the surrender of the being of man, but also of his entire temporal becoming; and that makes all the difference between this Yoga and all the others. In it, it is not enough that man's actions should be altruistic and selfless—though, till the final transformation, there is always a subtle, undetected self (ego) even in what is deemed as selfless,—it must be definitely and authentically God-willed and God-directed. The soul of man belongs neither to any society, nor to any nation, nor to any country, nor even to humanity,—it belongs solely and eternally to God; and to be dynamically united with God in life and be to Him "what his own hand is to man", is the purpose of its descent into mortal birth. And it is by an integral surrender of its whole terrestrial being to the Mother that it attains to the blissful and creative union, which is the fount and cradle of its divine becoming.

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

PART II

THE THREE STAGES OF SURRENDER

THE FIRST STAGE

ALL our turning towards God is caused by the soul or psychic being from behind. It is the soul that infuses its influence, little by little, into the most developed part of our being, whether it is the mind or the heart or the will in the vital, and then diffuses it into the other parts by a general penetration and expansion. When our mind begins to think of God or the Infinite, or of something transcending our ignorance and mortality; when, more or less released from the thralldom of the body and the vital desires, it seeks an Absolute of Light or an Absolute of Peace or an Absolute Bliss, it is invariably the soul that has inspired the seeking. But our egoistic personality is not aware of this occult influence and inspiration. It feels that it is itself thinking of the Eternal or the Absolute, or that there is naturally developing a love of God and devotion and an attitude of self-offering in its heart. It takes the credit for this spiritual orientation to itself and derives a secret, proud satisfaction from the change. And certainly there is nothing unnatural or undesirable in it.

So long as the soul does not come to the front of our consciousness, it is always the ego that is the organiser and ruler of our nature. It may be a tamasic ego, wallowing in inertia and indolence and sheer physical amenities; or it may be rajasic, drunk with desires and revelling in strife and struggle for power and possession; or it may be sattwic, stationing itself in the growing light of the intelligence (*buddhi*) and progressing in comparative peace and purity; but none the less it is the ego all through, living in a constant sense of its separateness from others and emphasising its personal inclinations and preferences. But a stage arrives in the evolution of the human individual, when he comes to perceive that his separateness is an illusion, a hollow and uneasy illusion, and that behind it there is something infinite and eternal, of which it is a finite and fugitive figure. This Infinite and Eternal appears to be more than a mere immutable, impersonal immanence—it looms as a Being, as the supreme Master of our existence, as God. This perception kindles in the individual a new faith and aspiration, and reverses his poise from self-seeking to self-surrender. The more he evolves, the more he realises his cabined littleness and his undeniable dependence on God, who enfolds and exceeds him. Not only does he feel that he is sustained and supported by the infinite Being, but that his very will is a tool of His will, and that all his decisions and determinations are but disfigured and diminished reflections of His inscrutable decrees. This perception is the right step towards knowledge taken by the individual, and it initiates

the first stage of surrender. It is his voluntary surrender to That which at once contains and transcends him.

As I have said above, this change in man is really engineered from behind by the soul which is evolving in him; for, left to itself, his egoistic personality would never have come by this liberating knowledge of its essential dependence on God. But in the beginning the soul works from behind the veil, and it is the ego that is the overt leader of the nature. It is, therefore, the ego that makes the surrender. Enlightened and fired with aspiration, it says, in effect, to God, "Take me, take my all, and make me Thine; for, in truth, I belong to Thee. Deliver me from myself, and let me be Thy servant." Not "I" and "mine", but "Thou" and "Thine" becomes then the burden of its heart's song. This stage of surrender is characterised by personal effort. Instead of seeking to arrogate every desirable object to itself, it yearns with a greater and greater sincerity to offer all it is and all it has to the All and Beyond-All. In the Integral Yoga this surrender tends to be integral, that is to say, it becomes the surrender of the mind with its thoughts and ideas, of life with its will and emotions and desires, and of the body with its movements and activities,—a synthetic progress in Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Karmayoga, though the start may be only with one of these, or, as in some cases, with two or all the three together. Constantly and conscientiously, the individual offers all his mind's thoughts, all his heart's love and devotion and all his works to the Divine Mother, and transforms his whole existence into a

happy and loving sacrifice, into an unremitting *yajña*, as the Gita calls it. At this stage of surrender, the seeker and lover of God becomes His servant; therefore, we call it the stage of the servant,—the long and arduous stage of self-consecration by personal effort. It is a stage of the progressive transference of the centre of gravity from the ego to the Divine. It is a stage of relentless self-observation, constant self-purification, unsleeping vigilance and persistent, unreserved surrender. "A tamasic surrender refusing to fulfil the conditions and calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection."¹

THE SECOND STAGE

In proportion as the self-offering through personal effort becomes more or less integral, the *sâdhaka* (spiritual aspirant) begins to feel that the hold of the ego on him is slackening, and that the Mother's Power is entering into him, replacing his personal effort. The sense of his being a servant tends then to disappear gradually into the growing experience of becoming an instrument of the Mother's Will. This transition takes long to be complete, for the ego dies hard, and the integral surrender is not an easy achievement. However, a sincere call of the whole being and its self-opening to the Mother wears down the residual resistance in the nature and clears the way for a more and

The Mother by Sri Aurobindo.

more manifest working of the Mother's Force. At times one feels the Force streaming in and impelling certain actions and then going out; at other times, it enters and occupies the being, lighting up some tracts of the mind, intensifying the Godward emotions, and firing up the will. It initiates some or many actions in the nature, the sâdhaka remaining peacefully passive and receptive. He becomes an instrument, having learnt not only the surrender of his will to the Mother, but also of his outer actions; and detached from the urges of ignorant desires, contemplates the world and the play of its dualities with the calm gaze of a dispassionate witness. The more his surrender is sincere and pervasive in the nature, the greater is the tangibility and effectiveness of the Mother's Force; and, feeling the Force working in him, initiating his actions and carrying them out, he is strongly confirmed in his experience and attitude of the instrument, and ceases to be the worker or the servant. This second stage is called the stage of the instrument. The illusory sense of oneself being the doer of one's actions is dispelled now for ever. One comes in concrete contact with the Mother's Force, universal, all-seeing and all-achieving, and, passive in its 'hands, like the machine in the hands of the mechanic, sees one's life and nature being re-moulded and transformed in the image of the Divine, and giving out an unwonted music of unearthly harmonies. Thought, feeling, emotion, volition, action,—nothing is repressed or restricted, but all are originated, guided and consummated by the Mother's Will and Force.

But, at this stage, there is the possibility of two dangers, which have to be carefully guarded against. 1) When the sâdhaka has learnt to be passive in the hands of the divine Mother, the forces of darkness, which may still be lurking in some neglected nooks of his nature or around him in the environment, may try to take advantage of this passivity and manoeuvre him into a deflection from the path. He has to be alert and vigilant, and plastic and passive only to the Mother's Force, and to no other. The transparent sincerity and genuineness of his surrender will, however, be his safeguard against the machinations of the hostile agencies; for, sincerity can never fail to assure the Grace and protection of the Divine; but it must be an integral and unflawed sincerity, which seeks the Divine and nothing but the Divine. 2) The second danger is a great magnification of the ego at this stage, when the sâdhaka is feeling the influx and operation of the Mother's Force in him. His experience of being a divine instrument may stimulate and inflate the ego, and the discouraged or repressed ambitions, if he has any, hiding anywhere in his nature, may rear their unholy heads and strive to lure him away from the path of the Divine. Power always corrupts, unless it is held by a consecrated and divinised consciousness; and the sâdhaka cannot do better at this stage of his spiritual career than resolutely continue in the attitude of the servant, till the take-over by the Mother's Force is complete and conclusive. He must always be on his guard against the delusion that he has "arrived"; for, as Sri Aurobindo says, in this

Yoga nothing is accomplished till all is accomplished.

At this stage, the sâdhaka may find in the beginning that though the egoism of the worker or the servant has disappeared, the subtler egoism of the instrument has taken its place. His consciousness has receded into the depths from where he knows and regards his triple nature of mind, life and body as not himself and separate from his real self; and yet there is a subtle relation, faintly felt, and growing fainter, which seems to keep up the illusion of his being an instrument. This egoism of the instrument, too, has to be stamped out of the consciousness and the entire being given over to the Mother to whom it really belongs.

THE THIRD STAGE

The third stage comes when the consciousness of the sâdhaka has completely identified itself with the consciousness of the Mother, and regards itself neither as a worker nor as an instrument. The soul, the central being in him, liberated from the bondage of Nature, though possessing it and enjoying its play, rests in the arms of the divine Mother, and its terrestrial being is sovereignly used by Her for the manifestation of the Divine. All egoism has faded out of his nature, all drive of desire has ceased for ever. He has become a child of the Mother, an eternal portion of Herself. Referring to this stage, Sri Aurobindo says, "Always she (the Mother) will be in you and you in her; it will be your constant, simple and natural experience

that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing or moving come from her and are hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, ananda of her Ananda. When this condition is entire and her supramental energies can freely move you, then you will be perfect in divine works; knowledge, will, action will become sure, simple, luminous, spontaneous, flawless, an outflow from the Supreme, a divine movement of the Eternal.”¹ This is the stage of the child.

These are the three stages of the triple or integral surrender, of which the last is the crowning result. The ego, the desire-soul, having been renounced, what marvels of knowledge and power and bliss pour upon our delightsoul, the *antarātman*! Transported from the blind struggle and suffering of the life of ignorance, we live in the unity and harmony of the Life Divine. Free in the soul and free in the transformed nature, clasped by the Transcendent, and moved by His Immanence, we live, even as the Divine lives, in the triune glory of His self-existence—Sat-Chit-Ananda. And that is the destiny to which the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo leads us.

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EGO—THE DESIRE-SOUL

PART I

WE have seen that the integral surrender of the human being is an essential pre-requisite of his complete union with the Divine and the total transformation of his nature. We have also seen that, paradoxical as it may appear, it is the ego that at once initiates and impedes this surrender. In order that our surrender may be sincere and integral, we must now try to understand what this ego is,—its origin, purpose, characteristic function, growth and end—and how we can proceed to deal with it in the light of a true knowledge, instead of rushing to grapple with it in the dimness of our half-baked ethical or religious mind, eager to achieve spiritual release by the sheer violence of drastic repressions and renunciations. Nothing is more helpful to a spiritual seeker than a clear and steady light in the consciousness, revealing the goal to be attained and the tangled working of his complex nature with and through which he has to advance. Lack of knowledge is lack of power, and most of the difficulties and failures in the spiritual life can be safely attributed to a lack of knowledge, and to the perfervid precipitancy and summary methods of our

aspiring ignorance. Human nature is bafflingly intricate, and it is only by a patient and perspicacious dealing with it under the direct guidance of the divine Light that we can hope to purify it in all its parts and workings, and help its transformation into its divine counterpart, the Super-nature or Parâ Prakriti. An impatient and panicky violence can only maim or cripple it.

There are two philosophical theories in regard to the ego. One postulates the ego as the creator of the universe, and credits it with the power of fashioning all phenomenal forms, and weaving the network of unsubstantial relativities. The individual egos are, according to this view, microcosmic centres of the one universal ego. There being no eternal existence or substance sustaining and supporting the ego, when the individual consciousness attains to spiritual emancipation (Mukti), the ego-creation ceases to exist for it, or exists only as a fleeting panorama of phantom forms. The liberated individual loses the very principle of individuation and retains no centre of his cosmic self-expression in the world,—he dissolves in the Eternal by the disappearance of the individualising ego or Avidyâ. The other theory considers the ego as a temporary, teleological construction of the evolutionary ignorance. According to it, the ego reflects—and invariably deflects and distorts while reflecting—the real spiritual individual behind; and when it is dissolved, there is no dissolution of all individuality and individual existence, but only of the artificial, separative ego-formation on the surface. The ego is a transitional

construction of Nature in her evolutionary self-unfolding, and represents, as best it can in the conditions of the Ignorance, the immortal soul of love and delight which is, in man, the spiritual centre and channel of God's manifestation in the world.

THE GENESIS AND GROWTH OF THE EGO

For tracing the birth of the ego we have to go back to the beginning of creation itself. It is said in the Upanishads that the Absolute, the One, willed to become many for the sheer delight of a multiple self-expression. This primal Will of the Divine is the starting-point of His self-multiplication. But it has a double working,—one from above downwards, from the creative Vijnâna¹ towards a complete involution in the Inconscience below; and another from below upwards, from the emergence of Matter, Life and Mind, by an ascensive process of evolution, towards the supernal glory of the Vijnâna or the Supermind above. In the present essay we are concerned with the realisation of the divine Will, in the evolution, which is posterior to the involution of the Superconscient, in a complete negation of Himself, in the Inconscience; and it must be borne in mind that this Will is a Will to the progressive formation of multiple divine individualities, temporal self-figurings of the eternal One.

¹ The Supermind

When Matter is created, its first movement is a self-splitting into infinitesimal atoms, which can be called the first insentient images or symbols of the forthcoming individualities. The One becomes many in these minute particles of Matter, and the work of self-multiplication progresses by the creation of the material world and the peopling of it with suns and moons and stars and planets. The dual principle of automatic attraction and repulsion, making for aggregation and disaggregation among the atoms, weaves the many-coloured marvel of the material creation. But these "many" are apparently inanimate, dumb, mechanically driven. They are only the first inchoate configuration, the initial draft of the ultimate object of evolution.

Next evolves life, pulsing with an awaking animation, and betraying a very elementary emergence of consciousness in the form of faint sensation. It garments the earth in the splendour of green. Numberless varieties of plant-life register the formation of organic, biological individualities. What was before mere masses or whirls or more or less stable or fugitive structures of atoms, almost indistinguishable from each other, and characterised by little perceptible individuality, has now been supplemented by living organisms with pronounced individual features and functions. There has evidently been formed in the heart of trees and plants a centralising and co-ordinating agency, something that disengages itself from the mass of inconscient Matter, and grows and develops by mutation and self-adaptation. But it is

sub-conscious, dimly awake only to a very limited gamut of sense-tremors. It has not yet evolved the ego, the conscious, centralising "I"; its germinating individuality is generic rather than specific. But that it is proceeding towards a greater, a more trenchant principle of individuation is evidenced by the growing complexity of its organism, on the one hand, and the more efficient co-ordination of its biological functionings on the other. The plants sleep and awake, feel pleasure and pain, and react to all external stimuli, as has been demonstrated by Sir Jagadishchandra Bose, and display a certain sense of self-preservation and self-defence. No doubt, the central being is shaking off its drowse, and coming forward to assert itself and possess its nature.

Then evolves mind, at first in its most elementary form of instinct in the animalcules and the lower animals, and next as a life-mind of hungers, and even a rudimentary, incipient reason. It shows a greater emergence of consciousness, a replacement of blind impulsions by more or less defined appetites, and a much more pronounced and expressive individuality. The animals possess developed instincts, operating in wider areas of experience; their sensations are more alert and definite than in the plants; they have emotions and feelings—love, affection, hatred, anger, jealousy, etc.—and, in some advanced types, even a flicker of the reasoning mind. Here, for the first time, we get a distinct centralising agency, a primary crystallisation of the individuality, a *subconscious ego*. This ego takes its stand upon the

separativeness of its existence, and, though the generic and gregarious habits and tendencies predominate in it, displays enough specific traits and characteristics and variable psychological contours to justify the hypothesis of a clear-cut ego with sharp edges and outlines, physical and psychological, as the eventual fulfilment of the principle of individualisation in the Ignorance. The animal foreshadows the full-fledged human ego.

When man appears on the scene of terrestrial evolution with his developing mind of reason and imagination, the ego-building tends to become coherent and complete. In him the sense of separativeness reaches its most rigid fixity, and an egoistic self-affirmation of the individuality becomes a dominant and governing factor. The human ego is not a subconscious but a *conscious ego*, asserting itself at every step of its life, imposing itself and encroaching upon others and demanding the subservience of everything to its personal ends. But its consciousness is a mental consciousness, floating like an isolated iceberg among other icebergs upon the waters of the encompassing Subscient, and, more often than not, moved and tossed by them, though it has always the delusive sense of its free will and independent initiative. It is in man that the work of individualisation seems to reach a climax, and that there is even a semblance of the fulfilment of the primordial Will of the Divine to conscious, multiple self-reproduction; but it is only a deceptive semblance, and not a fact. The normal human consciousness is an ignorant consciousness, seeking but not possessing know-

ledge,—it is not a representative of the divine Consciousness. The human being, therefore, though a developed individual, is not the perfect, divine individual, which it is his destiny to become. His is a cramped and clouded, a seeking and struggling and suffering individuality, dragging on a labouring and precarious existence in the rushlight of its mental reason. The Divine cannot yet announce in him, "Here am I, become many, and yet remaining myself, the eternal and indivisible One." The separative ego in man has no experience of the unity of the universal, nor of the absoluteness of the transcendent Existence,—it lives imprisoned in the dim shell of its limited personality.

It will have been clear from the above description that the ego-principle has created distinct individualities in human beings, multiple centres of mentally conscious existence, but not divine centres of luminous self-awareness and self-expression. Even having become many, the Divine has not yet become divinely many, which was His primal Will. For that supreme consummation and the ultimate goal of terrestrial evolution, man has to get beyond the ego and widen into infinity. The ego's work of separative individualisation done, it has to fade away, giving place to the true individual, the soul of man, which lives in the indivisible unity of existence and yet reveals a particular facet and aspect of the infinite Person.

THE PURPOSE AND UTILITY OF THE EGO

Our survey of the birth and growth of the ego has shown us that it is a temporary device, a phenomenal construction, of Nature for constituting mentally conscious and separate individualities in the Ignorance. In the midst of the amorphous flux of universal elements, the shifting intermixture of forces and energies, something was needed to serve as a centralising and co-ordinating agency, otherwise no individualities could have been formed. The soul, the true individual, could not certainly come forward at the very beginning and be the overt pilot of its evolution in Nature; the start from the Inconscience precluded such an abrupt intervention. Evolution, commencing from the Inconscient, has perforce to pass through the transitional stage of Ignorance, in which ego-centric division and discord inevitably predominate, before it culminates in the Knowledge and the unity of the Super-conscious. It is true that the soul directs its evolution even from the start, but from behind a thick veil of ignorance;—it has to purify and prepare its nature, its instrument of divine self-expression, through long and chequered stages of slow and gradual progress. In the stone and the mineral, it is hidden in distant depths, and throws out no hints of its occult presence, save in certain automatic reactions to external stimuli. In the plant, it has been able to release just enough of its consciousness to react by sensation to the impacts of the outside world, and register some of its subjective affections in its ob-

jective form and organic functioning. In the animal it has liberated a little more of its consciousness, always in the teeth of an unceasing gravitational pull towards the inert inconscience of its terrestrial origin, changed the blind urge of Nature into subconscious desire, accentuated and enlarged the action of the instinct, and initiated the play of emotions. Sentience, mobility, subconscious volition and emotions are the outstanding innovation effected by the indirect influence of the slowly emergent soul. Another innovation, the greatest from the standpoint of the aim of evolution, is the incipient formation of the ego in the animal, particularly in the higher types of it. The ego stands as a nucleus, a point of concentration and cohesion, tending to clinch the reflected individuality of the soul and impart to it a provisional definiteness and permanence against the shapeless drift and diffusion of the universal elements. In man, the soul has succeeded in making the ego his conscious representative, endowing it with reason, imagination, conscious volition, developed and articulate emotions, even tentative flashes of intuition, and—this is its signal achievement—an increasing urge towards self-transcendence. This urge is the harbinger of the soul's perfect emergence in Nature, and spells an eventual extinction of the ego. But the human ego is a chained and convulsed representative of the soul,—chained to the dualities and convulsed by desires and passions—and has no perception of the Will of God, which the soul is commissioned here to fulfil. Besides, it lives in limitations, and reasons and reflects and acts in the semi-

darkness of a mental consciousness. It proceeds on the basis of division and can only imperfectly imagine and conceive, but never realise and live, the unity and harmony of existence. But whatever its defects and drawbacks, it can justifiably claim to be the immediate architect of individualities in the domains of evolving ignorance, and even a puny and clouded precursor of the veiled, if self-revealing, Person. In spite of its inveterate insistence on division and difference, it hews the road to the coming unity; in spite of its attachments to its own desires and interests, it orientates towards a state of desirelessness and disinterestedness; and in spite of its smug complacency in its habitual avenues, its fenced, familiar pastures and bounded horizons, it strains after the Unknown and thirsts for the Infinite. It is a bridge between the blind mechanism of the material life and the luminous dynamism of the superconscient Spirit. Even if it be a fiction, as some hold, it is, according to Sri Aurobindo, "a practical and effective fiction." If it is a shadow cast by the soul upon the canvas of evolving ignorance, it is progressively penetrated and suffused with the soul-substance, in the concentrated light of which it finally vanishes for ever.

THE TRIPLE STRAND OF THE EGO

The three qualitative modes of the lower nature, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, interfuse in the ego in varying combinations, and give it its distinctive stamp. The ego can be predominantly *tâmasic*, *râjasic* or *sâttwic*. The *tâmasic*

ego is burdened with the inertia and incapacity of the physical nature. It is obsessed with its weakness and insignificance, and is averse to any sustained effort and high ambition. The rājasic ego is drunk with its own importance, and proud of its power and possessions. It exults in violent self-assertion and the strenuous pursuit of its multiplying desires. It counts no costs to achieve its ends, and is daunted by no difficulties. If it is crude and gross in its self-expression, it is never-the-less more evolved than the tāmasic ego, which is dull and heavy and supine. The sâttwic ego achieves a poise and purity, so far as they are possible in the comparative calm and clarity of the mind, but is attached to and secretly proud of them. It is obsessed with its virtues as the rājasic ego is obsessed with its desires and passions, and the tāmasic ego with its incapacity. The ego of the altruist or the humanitarian, of the callow religionist or the shallow puritan is a subtly magnified ego, all the more difficult to detect and renounce, because it is masked in apparent selflessness and buttressed with its ethical or religious principles. When the humanitarian says that he is ready to lay down even his life for the welfare of mankind or the vindication of his lofty principles, or, when the spiritual seeker seeks God not for God's own sake, but for the achievement of some spiritual end, unless it is their own soul speaking or seeking in them, it is unmistakably their glorified ego. In many self-justifying religious or spiritual lives one can often trace the subtle working of the sâttwic ego. But sâttwic or rājasic, the ego is the ego, as a chain is a chain,

whether it is of iron or gold; and so long as the ego persists, spiritual liberation is a far cry, let alone the Divine Life, which is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

THE TENTACLES OF THE EGO

The tentacles of the ego are spread out in every part of human nature. They pervade our body, our life parts, our sensations, our heart of emotions, our understanding and intellect, and determine and direct every action and reaction of our complex organism. It is not an easy thing to sweep them away at a stroke, or even at many strokes, from the entire nature. And unless the ego is completely blotted out, there is no possibility of the dynamic divine Presence being installed in our being for manifesting its glory upon earth. There is no greater enemy of spiritual liberation and perfection than the ego, "the lynch-pin of the wheel of ignorance," as Sri Aurobindo calls it. It has to be expunged from the whole being—from each of its fibres and each of its energies with which it is securely entwined. The immaculate soul of love and delight cannot live with the insatiable desire-soul in the same temple built for the service of the self-manifesting Divine. The shadow must depart, so that the substance, the psychic entity, may reign in its place. The end of the ego is the beginning of the manifest Divine in man.

THE EGO—THE DESIRE-SOUL

PART II

THE destiny of the individual, according to Sri Aurobindo, is to unite with God, who is his own supreme eternal Self, by the recovery of his universal and transcendent existence, and make his whole being and nature—his entire individuality—a manifesting centre and medium of the divine Existence—Consciousness—Bliss. His essential individuality has not to abolish itself, but continue to reveal the glory of the Universal and Transcendent, of which it is a delegate and representative in the material world. But this he cannot do so long as he is an ego, a limited separate being, wrapped up in his personal aims and interests, and the superficial relations with others, which he establishes through his egoistic personality. Whatever the greatness of his personality in intelligence, power or position, whatever its eminence in humanitarian and altruistic pursuits, he lives in the Ignorance, if he feels himself separate from others. The ego, in its self-enlargement, may come to perceive its unity with others, but, even at its best, this perception can be either a mental idea or a sentiment, not a fact of inner experience, not a dynamic stuff of consciousness. Even if it lives and acts only for others, it so lives and acts according to its own ideas, its personal principles and ethical rules, which are invariably based on more or less subtle preferences and pre-judgements of its ignorant or half-enlightened nature. It

lives in a vicious circle and can never get out of it except by self-extinction, which, naturally enough, it dreads. Man's will to self-transcendence would be quenched for ever if he failed to break beyond the ego, and his imprisoned individuality would never breathe in the Infinite and soar in the Eternal. The limitless ranges of his own consciousness, the countless worlds of his own being, his own universal and transcendent existence with its unbarred knowledge and inconceivable power and bliss would all remain sealed to him. If he ventured into spirituality, his ego would seek to vitiate the integrity of the start by erecting an artificial opposition between being and becoming,—to divide is its inveterate habit—and enforce an exclusive orientation. In all its efforts at self-exceeding, the human soul has always to dash against the barrage of the ego, which refuses to give way. Therefore, it is essential for a spiritual seeker to avail himself of the most effective means possible for his liberation from the ego. His most vigilant care must be directed to the replacement of the ego by "the true being which feels itself, even though individual, yet one with all and one with the Divine."¹

I shall now proceed to dwell upon the means^{*} Sri Aurobindo teaches for a complete expulsion of the ego from our entire being. I had better repeat here what I said in the beginning of this book that, unlike most spiritual teachers, Sri Aurobindo affirms the possibility

¹ On Yoga II by Sri Aurobindo.

of a complete elimination of the ego from our whole being, including even its active parts and its subterranean bases. It is absolutely incompatible with the aim and principle of his Yoga that the inner being of man should be free from the ego and able to unite with the Divine, and the outer and lower remain irretrievably in the grip of the ego. Liberation, according to him, has a double aspect: liberation of the soul and liberation of nature; and so long as there is the slightest lingering trace of the ego in any part of the nature, liberation is not integral, and no supramental perfection can be built upon it.

OPENING AND SURRENDER TO THE MOTHER'S FORCE

The first and greatest means of release from the ego, as of achieving anything substantial in the Integral Yoga, is a constant and exclusive opening to the Mother's Force. This cannot be too much insisted upon. The very basic principle of this Yoga is an entire reliance upon the Mother's Force, and an ungrudging surrender to her guidance. Only those who know how to open to her and make her do the *sâdhanâ* in them, know the secret of progress in this Yoga; for the tremendous difficulty, of not only purifying and liberating, but of converting and transforming the entire being by a descent of the supramental force, cannot be overcome by the unaided strength of any human being. To open to the Mother is to let her infinite Force enter into us and work in the light of its infallible, if to us inscrutable, knowledge. But what is opening? How

should one open? These are questions that are usually asked. The analogy of a closed room will best clarify the point. Each one of us is like a closed room, something like Leibniz's "window-less" monad, into which the light of the Divine or His power can hardly enter. To open to the Mother is to turn our consciousness to her, to open windows, so to say, on the infinite, and let her Force stream in. Describing the opening, Sri Aurobindo says, "To be open is simply to be so turned to the Mother that her Force can work in you without anything refusing or obstructing her action. If the mind is shut up in its own ideas and refuses to allow her to bring in the Light and the Truth, if the vital clings to its desires and does not admit the true initiative and impulsions that the Mother's power brings, if the physical is shut up in its desire, habits and inertia and does not allow the Light and Force to enter in it and work, then one is not open."¹ Opening can be most easily done by a constant, loving remembrance of the Mother. Her Presence is always there with its infinite Power within us, around us and above us, waiting to be called for help and protection. It is only our faith and confident call that are needed to make that Presence dynamically felt and effective.

But mere opening without surrender cannot avail much. The Mother's Force may come, but, finding our nature too rigid or recalcitrant, and reluctant to accept its influence and impulsion, can only withdraw, leaving us to stumble

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*

and suffer in our cherished ignorance. A glad and unreserved surrender is demanded, not only in the inner and the more developed parts of our being, but in the whole being and nature, so that the Force in its action may meet with no obstruction anywhere. Most often we surrender own body and life and the emotions of the heart as far as it is possible for our personal effort to do it, but reserve to ourselves the ideas and principles of our mind. This reservation stands in the way of the Mother's working in us. It is preposterous to expect the divine Force to act according to our ignorant mental notions and conceptions; if it did, it would lead us no better than our mental reason. I have already elaborated the process of surrender in the chapters on "The Integral Surrender" and "The Three Stages of Surrender". Here we are concerned only with the surrender of the ego. A most helpful movement in this direction, and one that comes naturally by the opening of the heart to the Mother, is to replace "I" and "Mine" by "Thou" and "Thine". "Not I, but Thou, O Mother; not my pleasure and convenience, but Thy glory and greatness," should be the constant thought in the mind, and the constant, consecrated feeling in the heart. Our being should be pre-occupied with the Divine as it is pre-occupied today with itself, with its petty egoistic self. "Let my thoughts be concentrated on Thee, my love flow uninterruptedly towards Thee, my body unweariedly and faithfully serve Thee", should be the silent, unceasing prayer of the whole being. Nothing can be more effective than this constant seeking for the Divine everywhere and

in all things and all happenings. One should watch the movements of one's nature and see whether this seeking has awakened there or not, and open and pray to the Mother for a constancy and intensity in it. If the thought wanders, or the emotions twine round something else or somebody else, they have to be quietly but tenaciously called back and turned towards the Divine. And along with surrender must go an uncompromising movement of rejection of all egoistic habits, tendencies and insistences. As an opening without surrender is almost ineffectual, so a surrender without rejection is a fruitless process, a self-deception. But in order that the rejection may be thorough, it is essential that surrender should be detailed and exhaustive. As I have said before, the tentacles of the ego are spread everywhere in our nature, and unless each element of our complex nature, each movement, each vibration of its energy is carefully scrutinised and cured of its egoistic turn, a complete freedom from the ego is impossible. *A detailed, dynamic surrender* of the whole being is the best means of eliminating the ego; for it is only in action that the faculties and energies of our being come into full play, and all the habits and tendencies, even those which are hidden or suppressed in the subconscious, emerge into view, and can be exposed to the Mother's transforming light. A passive life of ascetic spirituality, withdrawn from the world and its pouring impacts, considers discretion the better part of valour, and lets the sleeping dogs lie. But victory does not lie that way; the ego persists in the nature-parts even while the

soul thrills in the arms of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo is categoric in his insistence on the divine fulfilment of man *in life*, and not in the heavens beyond or in the supracosmic Silence; and for that dynamic fulfilment what is of primary importance is an extirpation of the ego from every part of human nature. A quiet, unfailing opening to the Mother's Force supplemented by a surrender of the whole being and a ruthless detection and rejection of the ego will go a long way towards the realisation of that fulfilment. But more is needed.

PSYCHIC PRESSURE AND CONTROL

The second means of release from the ego is the pressure and control of the psychic being or the soul. It is needless to say that the very push towards this release comes from the psychic. From the hidden centre of our being it rays out its light, so that the obscurity of our nature may be dissipated. All urge towards unity and harmony, light and love, beauty and bliss comes from the psychic, and expresses itself, first, in the most developed part of our being, whether it is the mind or the heart or life, and then spreads out to the other parts. The aspiration for the infinite and Eternal and the will to dedicate the whole being to His service rise like a flame from the psychic and infuse themselves into the nature-parts. But all this is a veiled action and influence from behind, and is not effective enough for the liberation and perfection we seek in the Integral Yoga. The psychic has to come

forward and overtly control the nature till it is totally offered to the Mother; it must exert its influence directly upon the languid and rebellious parts and compel them to surrender. Especially, without its powerful pressure, the ego will never think of renouncing its gratification in the finite and the fleeting—the cherished formations of its mind and the desires and interests of its life. If an indirect pressure of the psychic can induce the ego to give itself to others, to accommodate the interests of others to its own, even to sacrifice its own interests for the good of others,—this sacrifice too gives a secret satisfaction to the ego—a direct pressure and intervention is sure to shake the ego out of its personal satisfactions and turn it towards the Infinite. Love and devotion for the Divine and the will to offer itself to Him and serve Him will develop as a result of the increasing pressure of the soul. But it must not be supposed that the ego will disappear as soon as the psychic has come forward and put its redeeming pressure upon it. It is so firmly rooted and dominantly active in the nature that many other means than the psychic pressure have to be adopted for its final elimination. But the psychic pressure upon it to burn its boats and turn towards the Divine and the unity of existence is a potent and indispensable means.

But how to bring the psychic forward and put its pressure upon the ego? I shall deal with this question in a subsequent chapter; for the moment it is enough to say that a sincere opening to the Mother and a call upon her Grace to effect the psychic emergence, along

with a personal will and aspiration concentrated upon that end, will be found to be of inestimable help.

RENUNCIATION OF DESIRE

The ego lives and thrives on desire, and richly deserves the name of the desire-soul given by Sri Aurobindo. As it can be tâmasic, râjasic or sâttwic, so desire can also be physical, vital or mental, though all desires have their origin in the universal vital, and from there make inroads into the different parts of our being. It is not difficult to detect the gross forms of desire—the hungers and lusts, the greed and avarice, and the general craving for the objects of sense; but the subtle mental desires that come disguised as charity and benevolence and service, or that are intent on the vindication of a pet principle, or the realisation of an ethical or intellectual ideal even at the cost of a great sacrifice and suffering, have such a delusive air of sanctity about them that they command universal respect and admiration, and one never suspects that what is so palpably humane and self-denying can yet have the canker of the self, the protean ego, hiding in it. It is commonly held that the bad desires which darken or degrade the being or disturb its peace and tranquillity have to be renounced, and replaced by good ones, especially those for the service and well-being of others or for the advancement of social or humanitarian interests. Though it has an undeniable purifying effect, this substitution can only remove the grosser forms of the ego and

put the subtler ones in their place. Any desire, good or bad, which rises from a separative consciousness, is at once an offspring and a nourishment of the ego; and a seeker of spiritual freedom and divine union must take every care to cast it out as soon as he finds it stealing into him. The one object before his vision and consciousness must be the Divine, the Eternal and Infinite, and no finite object, however immense and important it may be,—family, society, country, humanity—must be allowed to intervene and obscure it. The sole, unremitting pre-occupation of his whole being, but a dynamic and not a static pre-occupation, must be an integral union with the Divine and an identification of his will with the Divine Will; and this he can never do so long as he cherishes a single desire in himself; for that one desire, ever so laudable or innocent in his eyes or in the eyes of men, is a pebble that can throw down the whole structure of his spiritual life. That one desire, which flatters his ethical or aesthetic personality, clouds his soul and stands in the way of its liberation. That one desire is a new lease given to the ego and a fresh link forged in the chain of his bondage.

The *Gitâ* is, therefore, perfectly right in insisting upon the slaying of all desires as a pre-condition to the state of *Brâhmisthiti*, a stable abiding in Brahman. Its insistence is categoric and uncompromising, for it knows that the persistence of desire is the persistence of the ego, and that the ego is the greatest hindrance to spiritual freedom. It prescribes self-knowledge as the preliminary

step¹, and a detailed surrender of all action to the Divine in an increasing love and devotion on the calm and stable basis of that self-knowledge. Sri Aurobindo's teaching on this point coincides with that of the *Gîtâ*, save for the utmost stress he lays on an absolute reliance on the Mother's supramental Force, and the practice of quiet detachment and rejection to which he gives an original turn of considerable value.

"The first condition for getting rid of desire is...to become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

"When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movements of the nature."²

What the *Gîtâ* calls self-knowledge Sri Aurobindo calls consciousness. But what does it really mean? In Sri

¹ *Sânkhya* Yoga precedes Karma Yoga in the *Gîtâ*.

² *Bases of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

Aurobindo's Yoga, to be conscious means to be aware of one's essential reality as distinct from one's phenomenal appearance. Our essential reality is a spiritual entity, made of love and bliss, and unidentified with the mutable nature it puts on for its self-expression in the world; and because it is not identified with anything, it has no separative ego in it. When we live in the true consciousness, we live in unity and harmony, and can clearly observe the divisions and discords of our lower nature, the myriad masks and ruses of the ego and its multiplying desires. The ego then appears incredibly ridiculous, and egoistic pride and satisfaction an insult to the infinite glory of our true Self. The eulogy and homage of the world fails to affect even the fringe of that consciousness. Let us take an example to illustrate the point. Take the case of a philosopher who is rising into fame, and feels gratified by the praise and honours he receives from the public. He has an ideal of achievement before him, to which he tries more and more to approximate. In course of time, urged by some inner developments, he takes to Yoga and makes remarkable progress in it. Passing through some decisive experiences, he realises his true being, his infinite and immortal Self. How will he now receive the praise and honour which used to gratify him so much? Has he any ambition for philosophical laurels left in him? What if he became as great as or even greater than Plato or Aristotle? What is the highest glory and achievement of the human life by the side of the luminous infinity and eternity of his

spiritual existence? Does he not now contain all, possess all, enjoy all in his illimitable Self,—all that the world can give and more than all that? Is not an Aristotelian or Platonic eminence but a phosphorescent bubble *vis-à-vis* his infinite self-existence and its unimaginable splendour? It is only when one looks down at ego from one's spiritual consciousness that it appears in its true colours—a petty tool and creation of the ignorant mind, arrogating to itself the powers and qualities it receives from the universal Nature and pluming itself upon its trite, ephemeral triumphs! Can the infinite Self exult over a finite and fugitive success? As well then might the sea plume itself upon the swell and shimmer of a foam-crested wave, or the sky upon the silver twinkle of a star! The true consciousness gives one the right perspective, the right sense of proportion, the right standard of values, and the power of right appraisal. Under its gaze the ego stands unmasked, abashed, shrivelled.

This does not mean that the spiritual man will not cultivate philosophy or poetry or any of the arts, and take a genuine delight in his creations. Rather, his Yoga will enhance his creative talent and deepen his insight into the way it flowers in him. Only, he will know his talent to be not his, but God's, a gift to him for the work of the divine self-expression, and he will not give it more than an instrumental importance. To him his personal greatness and the greatness of others will be the same, so far as their source is concerned; he will feel as much joy in the

achievements of others as in his own, for he will have lost the sense of separateness. All achievements he will acclaim as God's achievements, and feel no attachment to any. To live in this unlimited consciousness is to be conscious, and to be thus conscious is to be able to detect all the wiles and desires and disguises of the ego, and direct the Mother's Force to dissipate them. It is only a secure poise in this consciousness that can give an immunity from the insidious attacks of the subtle desires of the ego.

WIDENING AND ASCENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Another effective means of release from the ego is a progressive widening and ascent of consciousness. This can be more easily done if the inner centre has been discovered and realised. With a more or less stable experience of the psychic centre, and a poise in it, one can let one's consciousness sweep beyond the mind and enlarge into the cosmic vastness. If the knots of the ego have been frayed or loosened, and the invasion of the desires quelled, a quiet and intense aspiration will act as a strong lever of ascent. The individual consciousness, breaking out of the ego-bounds, will soar and expand till it realises the Atman, the individual-universal Self, or Vishwâtman, the Cosmic Self. This widening may be felt in the beginning by the ego as a mortal wrench, or a stunning and disintegrating shock. It is this shock, this dazed sense of self-loss that makes the ego associate

mystery with all supraphysical experience. It is, as if, something was bursting out of it, submerging and surpassing it at the same time, and expanding on all sides. Gradually, careering past the ego, the individual consciousness learns to breathe freely in that large and limpid air, and looks down upon its phenomenal form as a tiny knot of Matter, Life and Mind, as a minute point in the limitless vastness of his immortal self-existence. In that high ether there is no ego,—there is a clear and constant perception of the unity of existence; but down below in the nature-parts, the ego may still drag on its precarious life, more by the momentum of the past than by any fresh impetus and initiative. This mechanical action of the ego is replaced by slow or swift stages by the Mother's Force descending from above and taking possession of the nature. There is the possibility, not infrequent, of the individual consciousness being pulled down from its lofty station and identified again with the active nature of the ego, but such lapses are usually short-lived and cannot be a permanent bar to the final liberation. After some alternations of ascent and fall, and the continuing working of the Mother's Force in the nature, a certain security is gained in the higher poise and a considerable clarity and transparency in the lower nature, which preclude the frequency of the relapse and the false identification. The individual consciousness rises higher and higher, and each ascent to a new plane of consciousness is followed by a descent of the characteristic power of that plane, which effects, more puissantly than

the previous powers, the purification of the nature and the elimination of the ego. The largeness and light of the upper air penetrate into the lower mechanism, and little by little the knots of the ego loosen or snap. There grows, as a consequence of the action of the higher Force, an incipient sense of liberation in the nature-parts, and a more ready and effective response to the demands of Spirit. A greater and freer play of intuition in the mind, life and the physical being; a sensitive perception of and participation in the working of the universal Nature; an increasing impersonal serenity and flexibility; and a steadier drive of the spiritual force, are some of the developing results of the widening and ascent of consciousness. But the complete elimination of the ego is yet a far cry.

What we have described above is a change brought about in the individual by his self-extension and ascent to the higher planes of the being, and the descent of the characteristic forces of those planes into him. But, though it is a considerable change, it is not a radical conversion; for the ego still persists in the nether regions of the Subconscient, and influences the automatic movements, habits and tendencies of the active nature. Besides, even if one has succeeded in eliminating the ego-sense, which attaches itself to the instruments of the individual nature, one has not yet got rid of the "*fundamental ego-sense*, supporting itself on the consciousness of the mental Purusha behind the play." Sri Aurobindo calls it the "sheer ego", an uncanny, elemental "I"-ness, bare, un-

saddled and unpanoplied, but powerful enough to carry on the play of the separative Ignorance; and so long as "this fundamental ego-sense remains, there is no absolute release. It may be wider, purer, more flexible; release may be now much easier to attain and nearer to accomplishment, but still release has not been effected. We have to go farther, get rid of this ego-sense also and back to the Purusha on whom it is supporting itself and of whom it is a shadow...."¹ For a complete elimination of the ego-sense and the sporadic recurrence of its reflex action in the Subconscious, one has then to rise into the Overmind which is beyond the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and the plane of Intuition, and bring down the Overmind gnosis into the Subconscious and the Inconscious. The Overmental widening of consciousness is a global universalisation, and its perfection marks the snapping of all egoistic bonds, and a considerable clearing of the nature of the separative sense. One begins to live and move and have one's being in a global unity. And yet some dissolving fragments or ghosts of the old egoistic habits and impulsions may be detected sometimes in some obscure nooks or hidden folds of the nature. The characteristic action of the Overmind being selective, though unitarian, it cannot integrate the entire being into a divinely dynamic unity. In order to effect a complete clearance of the vanishing traces of the ego, the individual must rise to the Supermind, and the Mother's supramental

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

Force descend into the nature and deal directly with them. The absolute release from the ego in the active nature and the Subconscious, and the blotting out of all its vestigial action in the being can only be effected by the Supermind with its supreme transforming Force. No other spiritual power is capable of this consummation.

It is important to note here—it has already been hinted at before—that in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the liberation from the ego that is sought to be achieved, is not a liberation in trance or in an absorbed state of consciousness, immersed in the silence or the love and joy of the Divine, but a dynamic liberation, invulnerably immune to the attack of the ego in any part of the being, even the most physical and superficial. It means a complete universalisation of the whole being, and a transformation of the Subconscious and the Inconscient, so that the unitarian consciousness may be established everywhere, and the dynamic personality have an unfettered play upon it as a permanent basis,—an unprecedented triumph of the human soul, inevitable as an evolutionary perfection, but possible only by an ascent of the individual to the Supermind and the answering descent of the supramental Mahâshakti into Matter.

What remains when the ego fades out of existence? The infinite and indestructible substance, of which the ego was a convulsed shadow; the liberated being, delivered for ever from the nightmare of the dualities and discords of mortal life and restored to his universality and transcendence and his union with the Divine and

with all existence, and fulfilling God's Will on earth through his transfigured individual nature. Realising God in himself and God in all and beyond all, himself in all and all in himself, *sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmani sarva-bhūteṣu cātmānam*—he lives and acts in the inalienable unity of existence, and expresses that blissful unity in terms of a harmonious God-revealing diversity.

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHIC—THE DELIGHT-SOUL

PART I

EVERY cosmic principle in our individual composition is double: we have two bodies, two lives, two minds and two souls. They are derived from the involutionary and evolutionary movements of Spirit. We have a gross physical body, *annamaya śarīra*, and a subtle physical body, *sūkṣma* or *līṅga śarīra*; a life-force working in our gross-body and conditioned by its past evolution in Matter, and a *sūkṣma* or subliminal life, which is larger and more flexible, and not subject to the limitations of the former; we have a surface mind of aspiring ignorance, chained to the ego and the desires, the appetites and normal reactions of the life and the body, and dominated and deluded by the senses, and a subliminal mind, which is wider and wiser, open to the universal mind and its movements, and full of intimations and inspirations from the higher planes of consciousness. Similarly, we have a double soul—the egoistic desire-soul in front, living in the disquieting illusion of a separate existence, and cut off from its source, which yet sustains and supports it from behind a veil, and the delight-soul or psyche, which dwells in the inmost sanctuary of our being, the immortal inhabitant of our

mortal tenement. In the last essay we have seen what the desire-soul is and how, having helped the evolution of the mental being to a certain extent, having even led him to the frontiers of his consciousness and given him a glimpse of the infinite, stretching beyond, it yet stands as the greatest bar to his irrevocable self-transcendence. In the present essay I propose to study the delight-soul or the psychic,—its origin, essential nature, evolution, mission, aspiration and fulfilment.

THE PSYCHIC ENTITY

The psychic or the delight-soul is our eternal and essential individuality in Nature. It is made of love and bliss, and is the very self of an immaculate purity. It comes from the Bliss-self of *saccidānanda*, as our mind comes from the *viññānamaya puruṣa* or the Supramental Being, our life from the *cit-tapas*, and our body from the *sat* or the eternal divine Substance. In the beginning of our terrestrial evolution, this soul or psychic entity remains veiled behind the turbid working of our surface nature. It exerts its influence from behind and prepares its instruments of manifestation. It is the one thing in us that is imperishable, and "nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame." It has a direct, spontaneous perception of truth and beauty and goodness, and an infallible sense of the unity and harmony of things. "This veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, inextin-

guishable even by that dense unconsciousness of any spiritual self within which obscures our outward nature. It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge. It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic....” “It is... untouched by death, decay or corruption....It is...the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature.”¹ The psychic entity contains all possibilities of our manifestation, but is always superior to them. It is neither limited by its manifestation nor ever exhausted by it.

The seat of the psychic in us is behind the heart. It is the individual spark-soul supporting the evolution of our mind, life and body in the material world. It is full of love and devotion for the Divine, and aflame with an aspiration for the manifestation of His Grace and Glory in terrestrial nature. It is the child of the divine Mother descended into the evolutionary experience, and immediately, intimately aware of Her Will in itself.

¹ *The Life Divine*, by Sri Aurobindo—Vol. I, Chapter XIII..

THE JIVA OR JIVATMA

It is better to note here that Sri Aurobindo uses the term Jiva or Jivâtâmâ in a sense which is different from that generally attached to it in Indian philosophy. The current connotation of the word is the embodied soul, which passes from life to life and whose liberation from the meshes of Nature or Maya or Karma is the salvation so strenuously sought after. But this connotation is indefinite and incomplete, as it leaves the origin and *swabhāva* (essential nature) of the soul and the purpose of its descent into birth unexplained, and rather obscure. As in everything else, Sri Aurobindo's description and differentiation of the Jivâtâmâ, the psychic entity and the psychic being are characterised by a clarity and precision remarkably rare outside the province of science, and reveal the three aspects of the same reality in such a way that the various spiritual realisations of them fall into their proper places without creating the confusion which not unoften bewilder the beginners on the path.

According to Sri Aurobindo,—and he is here at one with the Gitâ—it is the supreme Mother, the *parā prakṛti*, who has become all these numberless Jivâtâmâs, these multiple centres of the one transcendent and universal Consciousness—*parā prakṛtirjīvabhūtā*. Each Jiva or Jivâtâmâ is an individual Self in conscious union with the Transcendent and the Universal. It does not descend into evolution, but presides from above over the evolution of the psychic entity, which is its self-projection or

representative in the material world. The Jivâtmâ is our eternal and central being, untouched by the mutations of our nature and unqualified by the varying forms assumed by our evolving soul here. It also projects a Purusha, a representative of itself on each plane of our consciousness—a *manomaya puruṣa* in the mind, a *prāṇamaya puruṣa* in the vital, and an *annamaya puruṣa* in the physical—and exercises an ultimate co-ordinating control, subject to the Will of the Divine, over the various parts and activities of our nature. These Purushas are the instrumental, while the psychic is the central, self-projection of the Jivâtmâ. When the psychic is awake and evolved in our being, it widens its individuality and rises into union with the Jivâtmâ. This union gives the psychic the experience of its own universality and its oneness with all in the cosmic Divine; and through this experience of the universal it can pass on into the embrace of the Transcendent.

THE PSYCHIC BEING

The psychic entity, which is at first an undifferentiated power of the divine Consciousness, the immaculate, inextinguishable spark-soul, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, puts forth and develops its individuality in the nature,—its representative central Purusha, the psychic being. The subtle distinction between the psychic entity and the psychic being has to be clearly grasped. "The psychic

being is...the soul (the spark-soul or the psychic entity) of the individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is that spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical as the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into Prakriti of Knowledge."¹ It is the Antarâtmâ or Chaitya Purusha, as distinguished from the Jivâtmâ, of which it is an evolving delegate here. As the Jivâtmâ is our central being above manifestation or evolution, so the psychic being is our central being in evolution. In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the importance of the psychic being is of an immense practical nature, as we shall presently see. Nothing substantial and abiding can be achieved in this Yoga without the opening of the psychic being and its self-infusion into the parts of our nature. The psychicisation of our being is regarded as the first solid achievement upon which the later attainments and conquests can be securely based. Our normal human nature would never care to turn to the Divine or the Eternal, were it not for the occult influence of the psychic. Whenever there is an aspiration for the Infinite, for a transcendence of the ego and its inherent limitations, for the essential unity and harmony underlying the divisions and discords of the surface appearances; whenever the heart aches for the bliss ineffable, or the mind thirsts for the knowledge illimitable, it is the psychic being that has been at work,

¹ On Yoga-II by Sri Aurobindo.

purifying and preparing the nature and turning it to the Love and Light of the Divine. When the being is obsessed with the superficies of existence and its passing interests, and has not developed the finer perception of any higher values and supersensuous realities, any refined aesthesis and sensibilities; when it wallows in the material life and its crude amenities, or even makes its mental powers and faculties subserve the ends of material life, it means that the psychic in it has not awakened—the being is still wandering through a spiritual night. The psychic being has an infallible discrimination,—it can immediately tell the true from the false, the beautiful from the ugly, the good from the evil, and the divine from the undivine. When it is fully awake and in control of the nature, spiritual life becomes a triumphal progress from light to light on a surge of developing joy and power. It is the psychic alone that can give the readiest response to the divine call, and offer all itself for the fulfilment of the divine Will. Its love and devotion and self-surrender to the Divine are as unstinted and spontaneous as the ego's devotion and self-giving to its mundane pursuits. The psychic being is the temple of the Divine in us, and it is because of it that even the vilest man, the most confirmed sinner sometimes feels a qualm and a contrition, and lifts up his eyes to Heaven for a ray of light, a redeeming touch of Grace. It is because of the psychic that even the hardened heart of a criminal sometimes melts, and the hand that rises to strike falls limp with pain and pity. "It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret,

cause of man's turning to the spiritual life and his greatest help in it."¹

THE MISSION AND ASPIRATION OF THE PSYCHIC

What is the mission of the psychic? Why does it descend into human birth? This is a moot problem of religion and philosophy, and upon its solution depend the meaning and purpose of human life, if it is conceded that man has a soul. Buddhism denies the existence of any soul or immortal entity subsisting in the midst of the cosmic flood; therefore, for it there is no meaning or purpose in human life except to dissolve it into its constituent elements and have done with it,—done with the desire it generates and the suffering it entails. And the Buddhistic compassion beckons man out of the life of suffering into the silence of the Void, or the fathomless peace of the Permanent, beyond the swirl of *sanskaras*. For life its only message is one of sudden or gradual extinction. Christianity regards life as a long probation and preparation, and counsels its adherents to lay up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and whence thieves do not break through nor steal". Its kingdom of heaven upon earth is a moral kingdom of piety and charity, the reward of which can only be reaped in heaven. If rebirth is denied, the soul has only one human life, the present, petty, precarious span of three-score and ten,

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*—Vol. I.

to do whatever it can, to be "raised up at the last day." The earthly life is used as a vaulting board, and not as a vehicle for the outpouring of the divine splendour. In the ascetic schools of Vedânta, life is looked down upon as a lie or a snare or a colossal hoax, from which flight is the only wisdom. They do not care to ask themselves why the soul has come down at all and got enmeshed in this life, and whether there is any purpose behind it. Vaishnavism contemplates the world as the *lilâ* or play of the All-Beloved and All-Beautiful, but a *lilâ* that is mysterious, inscrutable, baffling, and without any definite issue; and the Bhakta tends to withdraw from it in order to enjoy an unbroken continuity of the inner union. In almost all religions and philosophies there is a curious confederacy of silence over the purpose of the soul's birth in the material world. To call the birth a fall explains nothing, unless you account for the fall and discover its rationale; for, surely in the divine dispensation of Providence, such a tremendous event could not have occurred as a mere chance or an inexplicable error.

Sri Aurobindo does not by-pass this momentous question. In fact, he makes the mission of the soul's birth the focal point of his theory of terrestrial evolution and manifestation. According to him, each soul or psychic is a centre of the multiple Divine, a centre that has descended into birth for the evolution of its inalienable divinity in an individual nature. It assumes birth in order to manifest the Divine in one of His individual aspects. If the world is not an illusion or an amorphous flux of chaotic

possibilities, but a progressive self-expression or manifestation of the one Omnipresent Reality, the Supreme Being, then the psychic is the conscious and co-operating medium of that manifestation. The very presence of the psychic beings in the material world is an indubitable proof, not only of the presence of the Divine here,—that is admitted by most theistic religions—but also of His Will to an eventual perfection in self-manifestation. The psychic is the living and immortal image of the divine individuality, and the means of multiplying diversity in unity. It is the one luminous point in man that proclaims the advent of the Eternal Sun.

“The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for Its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.”¹ It is quite possible that, emphasising its tendency to peace and silence, the psychic may turn to the immutable Self and merge in its vast freedom and impersonality,—a consummation which it usually seeks when there is a contracting movement in spirituality, and a strong, almost compelling centripetal magnetism. But that is a truncated achievement in which the soul wins its freedom by an escape and an evasion of its God-given mission. Sri Râmakrishna had the wisdom to nip this tendency in

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*,—Vol. I.

Vivekânanda as soon as he perceived it, and turn him towards the fulfilment of his soul's mission. This exclusive tendency of the soul towards personal salvation or self-annihilation in the infinite, immutable existence is accentuated, if not superinduced, by the force of crystallised traditions in the subliminal as well as in the surface consciousness of the individual and the race, and it takes nothing short of a revolution in will and thought and aspiration to break these hard crystals and clear the passage for the full efflorescence of the psychic, which is a global turning, not only to the immobile Impersonal, but to the Supreme Being, inducing a quiet, unrelaxed insistence on the surrender and transformation of the nature for His perfect manifestation in the material world. The psychic has an innate, unquenchable aspiration for union with the Divine through love and self-giving, but the union that gives it the highest fulfilment and satisfaction is not a passive and partial, but a dynamic and integral union,—a union which is self-revealing, self-reproducing, world-illuminating; a union in the body and all its activities as much as in the heart and the mind and in the inner depths. It is to achieve this integral union and become a thrilled channel of the divine splendour in the material world that the soul descends into darkness and mortality; and this aspiration it infuses into its whole nature, little by little, till all unconsciousness, all obscurity, all disharmony, all separative egoism are transformed into a luminous consciousness and a harmonious, manifold unity. The aspiration of the psychic is for the victory of

the Divine over death and darkness and division and discord, and His undisputed sovereignty over all earth, even as it is over all heaven.

THE OPENING OF THE PSYCHIC

There are two ways of opening the psychic: one is direct and comparatively easy, and the other indirect and rather difficult. The first comes by a simple and sincere concentration in the heart with a growing love and devotion for the Divine and an untiring self-dedication to His service. A constant thinking of the Divine, an unebbing flow of the heart's purest emotions to the Supreme Lover, and an unflagging self-offering to His Force in every part of the being are a great help to the opening of the psychic being and its coming to the front. But all this movement of love and devotion and dedication, to be fully and swiftly effective, must proceed on the quiet basis of a consciousness that knows itself to be separate from its natural instruments and eternally belonging to the Divine. It is this consciousness that is the most decisive factor in the spiritual turning of a man. Some subtle intuitive perception, some inner vision or experience, some living faith and divination gives the start and serves as the germinating nucleus of the spiritual life. This tiny nucleus becomes the rock of safety against the blows and buffets of adverse forces. Deriving strength from the recondite sources, it grows and expands, annexing part after part of the being till all or most is retrieved

from ignorance and egoism, and surrendered to the Divine. This initial glimpse or experience is the sign of the awakening of the psychic, and what one has to do is to sustain and fortify it by an increasing aspiration for the Divine and a surrender to His Supreme Force, the Mother. But a mere awakening of the psychic being is not all that we understand by the term opening. The opening of the psychic being means its coming to the front and its progressive control over the nature. It means that the love and devotion and surrender, which are natural and spontaneous in the psychic, begin to infect the other parts of the being, so that the mind may turn its thoughts to the Divine and seek to know and understand His Will; the heart may turn its emotions to the Divine and seek its highest satisfaction, its termless delight in loving and adoring Him and Him alone, in Himself and in all; and the life and the body find their completest fulfilment in serving Him and accomplishing His purpose in the world. The opening of the psychic being implies a developing control and co-ordination of the parts of our nature and their detailed and exhaustive consecration to the Divine. An unwavering concentration in the heart, a quiet but intense aspiration for the Divine, a call and reliance on the Mother's Grace, a renunciation of desire and attachment and egoism, and a growing spontaneity in devotion and surrender, are the most potent means for the opening of the psychic.

The second way of opening is "the descent of the higher consciousness through the mind". The higher

consciousness, descending from above, releases the heart-centre and opens the psychic. This happens in cases in which the emotional being is not much developed, and the mind has taken the lead in the sâdhanâ. But by whichever way it comes, the psychic opening is a *sine qua non* of the liberation and supramental perfection of our integral being.

PART II

THE REALISATION OF THE PSYCHIC

"CONCENTRATE in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

"A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you—your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates."¹

In these few packed words the Mother outlines the most rapidly effective way of realising the psychic. A sincere, intense aspiration and an unflagging concentration in the depths of our being, shutting out the unending clamours and conflicts of the outer members,

¹ *Words of The Mother.*

is the royal road. But it must be a loving aspiration and a loving and living concentration, not a routine, mechanical exercise,—a joyous progress through constant devotion and self-giving. Two things which greatly help this progress are: (1) calm and equality and (2) a growing, spontaneous discontent with the normal round of life with its petty aims and puerile struggles, its fixed grooves of narrow ideas and recurrent thoughts, and its ravaging desires and heaving reactions. The more we seek for the soul, the more we come to feel the customary atmosphere of our self-centred existence as positively boring and suffocating. And seeking and longing for the soul, we advance, step by firm step, through the long, dim passage of our inner being till, one day, as the Mother says, the passage suddenly dissolves in a splendour of light, or a door swings open upon a flaming Presence, or it is a well or abyss of dazzling effulgence in which we find ourselves. It is an experience unlike any that ever takes place in our ordinary life, unlike any that even the sharpest human mind can ever conceive or imagine. It is an experience in a new dimension of being, in an unaccustomed ether of existence. It is an experience that changes the very stuff and texture of our deeper consciousness, and leaves an indelible mark even upon the outer. Once we have it, be it even for a fleeting moment, we know what we are in our essence—infinite and immortal; and we receive, as it were, a fire-baptism in that luminous infinity and immortality. And we also know, not by the thought or idea of the mind, or the feeling or emotion of our

human heart, but by something much deeper and elemental in our being,—an immediate, intimate sense, an indubitable, mystical perception, an impalpable light, which is the very grain of our consciousness—that we are not the struggling and suffering creatures of Nature we seem to be. An unimaginable purity, an unstirring calm of eternity possess us in their ineffable sweetness. A veil has been lifted, a long-cherished illusion has been dispelled for ever.

Another simultaneous experience, unless the psychic realisation be partial and incomplete, is that the flood-gates of our love and devotion for the Divine are flung wide open, and we feel an exclusive and ecstatic tension towards Him. The tension, the turning has no alloy of the mental effort or the vital urge in it—it is an automatic turning, as natural as the turning of the sunflower towards the sun, and infinitely more ardent. Our soul seems to hunger and thirst only after Him, and recognise Him alone as the Master of our being, the sole reason of our existence. There is something so spontaneous, so sparklingly joyous in this love and self-giving that even aspiration seems to melt and disappear in a mute rapture of fulfilment, and all the chords of our being vibrate to the ecstasy of the divine touch.

The third concomitant experience, or more precisely, the third strand of the total indivisible experience, is an unutterable sense of release, a tremendous relief, from the gnawing cares of the life of ignorance. An abysmal peace sucks us in, and a tranquil silence envelops and embalms

our repose. A serene eternity, in which there is no succession of quivering moments, and a radiant unity, unwounded by division, cradle and sustain our soul in that transporting bliss of self-realisation.

These three experiences together constitute the psychic realisation in its essence; but in the case of each individual, it has usually a colour and a rhythm characteristic of his individuality and the peculiar nature of his aspiration. But it is quite possible, as I have said above, that the being, emphasising the peace and silence of the realisation, and revelling in the calm passivity of its freedom, may turn altogether towards the immobility of the impersonal Self or Spirit, and seek to blot itself out in it. But that is a rather narrow and exclusive orientation, happily becoming a less common eventuality than before. The incipient expansiveness of the spiritual impulse in modern humanity presupposes a widening of aspiration and presages a very comprehensive fulfilment—a dynamic and integral union with the Divine, and not a mere merger in the silent immutability of His impersonal existence. The aspiration with which the Integral Yoga starts is such an inclusive and embracing aspiration, which seeks to harmonise and unify all the aspects of the supreme Reality in the most comprehensive spiritual realisation. Sri Aurobindo does not countenance the escapist aspiration of the soul towards the blank peace or the silent void of the unconditioned Vast, as will be evident from the following quotation from the third book of his epic, *Savitri*:

A stillness absolute, incommunicable,
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known,
All that the labouring senses still would weave
Prolonging an imaged unreality.
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies space;
Only the Inconceivable is left,
Only the Nameless without space and time:
Abolished is the burdening need of life:
Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief;
The ego is dead; we are free from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's
power?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?
One was within thee who was self and world,
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?
Escape brings not the victory and the crown!
Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on,
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.

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A black veil has been lifted; we have seen
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;
But who has lifted up the veil of light
And who has seen the body of the King?

*
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A large white line has figured as a goal,
But far beyond the ineffable sun-tracts blaze.
What seemed the source and end was a wide gate,
A last bare step into eternity.
An eye has opened upon timelessness,
Infinity takes back the forms it gave,
And through God's darkness or his naked light
His million rays return into the Sun.
There is a zero sign of the Supreme;
Nature left nude and still uncovers God.
But in her grandiose nothingness all is there:
When her strong garbs are torn away from us,
The soul's ignorance is slain but not the soul.
The zero covers an immortal face.
A high and black negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God's last word,
Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
The meaning of this great mysterious world.
In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul
And in the ray reveal the parent sun :
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,

It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.
 To free the self is but one radiant pace;
 Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.

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I have appended this long and luminous extract and dwelt on the escapist tendency of the soul both in this and the previous essay, because, next to surrender to the Mother, the nature and quality of the aspiration is the most important factor determining the direction and culminating perfection of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The initial aspiration of our being, as it turns towards the Infinite and Eternal, contains, like a seed, the full potentiality of the future efflorescence. If the integral, dynamic union with the Divine is the aim, as it is in the Integral Yoga, then there must be, in the aspiration with which one starts on the path, something like a prescience or foreshadowing of it. The beginning must betray, to the eye that can observe, the dim contours of the distant end. The Integral Yoga cannot be pursued to its glorious consummation by those who have any exclusive leaning towards personal salvation, or the vast peace and silence of the immutable Self.

EXPERIENCE AND VISION

The realisation of the psychic or the soul, as described above, is an experience which operates a basic change in a

great part of our consciousness, and from which we never return the same as we were when we entered into it. It is felt as a new birth, a revolutionary reversal of our normal poise, and an opening up of mysterious horizons. Its effect is, therefore, far-reaching and abiding. But a vision is a different thing. It is seeing and knowing rather than being and becoming. There are, it is true, certain visions which produce a considerable change in us, or leave an ineffaceable imprint upon our being and nature, but they are more an exception than a rule,—and even they do not possess the power to transform our consciousness. Sometimes it happens that a vision is followed by an experience; in that case, whatever change or transformation takes place in us should be attributed to the experience, and not to the vision. Besides, there are visions and visions, and one must be able to tell the true from the false.

Let us take an outstanding example of a vision of the soul and its eternal Master dwelling in it. Suso, the Western mystic, once saw a vision of angels and, as Dean Inge describes it, "besought one of them to show him the manner of God's secret dwelling in the soul. An angel answered, 'Cast then a joyous glance into thyself and see how God plays His play of love with thy loving soul.' He looked immediately, and saw that his body over his heart was as clear as crystal, and that in the centre was sitting tranquilly, in lovely form, the eternal Wisdom, beside whom sat, full of heavenly longing, the servitor's own soul, which leaning lovingly towards God's side, and encircled by His arms, lay pressed close to His heart."

It is a beautiful vision, as illuminating as enrapturing; but it is evidently mixed with Suso's mental constructions, and cast and garbed in his mental symbols.¹ It must have produced a considerable effect upon him, but an effect bearing more directly upon his mind and heart than upon the deepest layers of his consciousness, as the pictorial representation and the detached visual perception clearly testify. But an experience is neither a representation nor a detached perception—it is a realisation by identification, a knowing by being, an obliteration of the subject-object duality in the perfect osmosis of union. And yet, baffling all mental understanding, a rapturous relation of love persists in the heart of that union. A vision, if it is not very powerful, may, in course of time, and particularly if life is forced in a contrary direction, fade away from the mind, or remain only as a vapid memory in the remote background of one's consciousness; but an experience is a guest that never departs—it has come to stay and conquer and possess. "A vision is a vision," says the Mother, "but an experience is a gift."

THE PSYCHIC ATTITUDE IN ACTION

The true psychic attitude is one of blissful love and unstinted self-giving. It is polarised to the Divine, but this polarity is not exclusive, it is all-inclusive. The light of consciousness and the force of consciousness being,

¹ These symbols and constructions are usually subconscious.

unlike as in our mind, one and indivisible in the fully awakened psychic being, the stress of its personality is at once towards the ecstasy of the divine union and the perfect expression of that union in its terrestrial nature. The sole self-sufficing delight of the psychic is in the Divine and in the fulfilment of His Will in the world. Fully conscious of the reason of its existence, it does not count it a sacrifice to forgo even the highest ecstasy of a rapt union with the Divine for the sake of accomplishing His work and promoting His manifestation. It is a mistake to think that the soul or the psychic seeks only the absorbed bliss of the divine union and has a natural aversion to the world and its activities.¹ That seeking, as we have already seen, is an intense but exclusive trend, not the whole tenor of its being and consciousness. "You may think, my daughters," says St. Teresa, "that the soul in her state of union should be so absorbed that she can occupy herself with nothing. You deceive yourselves. She turns with greater ease and ardour than before to all that which belongs to the service of God, and when these occupations leave her free again, she remains in the enjoyment of that companionship."

But where shall we look for the most perfect illustrations of the true psychic poise, the true psychic attitude, the mysterious persistence of the rapturous relation of the psychic love and devotion in the midst of a rapt

¹ There is always a mental or vital alloy in such a one-sided seeking.

divine union, the psychic control and transformation of nature, and the unwearied insistence on service, on the perfect fulfilment of the divine Will and the manifestation of the supernal glory of the Divine upon earth, except in the *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*?

THE PSYCHIC POISE

The essential psychic poise is one of perfect peace and equality. The psychic does not so much seek after the Divine as see and feel and enjoy Him. Its aspiration is a pure flame, calm and unwavering, that rises straight towards its eternal Beloved. It knows no flurry or flutter, but is serenely firm in its trust in the Divine. If love and delight are the very stuff of its being, peace is its foundation, and an infinite patience the rhythm of its intensity. This poise of peace and patience is beautifully illustrated in the following Prayer of the Mother:

"In Peace and Silence the Eternal manifests; allow nothing to disturb you and the Eternal will manifest; have perfect equality in face of all and the Eternal will be there....Yes, we should not put too much intensity,¹ too much effort into our seeking for Thee; the effort and intensity become a veil in front of Thee: *we must not desire to see Thee*, for that is still a mental agitation which obscures Thy Eternal Presence; it is in the most com-

¹ It is mental or vital intensity that is meant here.

plete Peace, Serenity and Equality that all is Thou even as Thou art all, and the least vibration in this perfectly pure and calm atmosphere is an obstacle to Thy manifestation. No haste, no inquietude, no tension; Thou, nothing but Thou, without any analysis or any objectivising, and Thou art there without a possible doubt, for all becomes a Holy Peace and a Sacred Silence.

“And that is better than all the meditations in the world.”¹

THE PSYCHIC LOVE

The psychic love is a radiant flower of identity, and yet in the very heart of identity it maintains a mysterious relation of love and devotion with the Divine; for, if it merged in the Divine and His Love, the psychic individuality would be abolished, and abolished with it the very means of divine manifestation in the world. This subtle duality in the midst of the closest unity is very sweetly brought out in the Mother's Prayer of May 21, 1914 :—

“Outside all manifestation, in the immutable silence of Eternity, I am in Thee, O Lord, an unmoving beatitude. In that which, out of Thy puissance and marvellous light, forms the centre and reality of the atoms of Matter I find Thee; thus without going out of Thy Presence I can disappear in Thy supreme consciousness or see

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, Dec. 5, 1912.

Thee in the radiant particles of my being. And for the moment that is the plenitude of Thy life and Thy illumination.

"I see Thee, I am Thyself, and between these two poles my intense love aspires towards Thee".

The Mother has identified herself with the Divine both in His transcendence and in His universal immanence, she has become one with Him, Himself, and yet she sees Him; and between these two poles, her psychic love aspires for Him. This duality in unity, this difference in identity, incomprehensible to the human mind, is a source of infinite bliss to the psychic, permitting, as it does, a constant union and communion, without which the psychic mission of manifesting the Divine would not be possible.

The psychic love is a constant oblation and an unfailing incentive to service. It wants nothing for itself—it is a flame that is content only to burn. "O Lord, I am before Thee as an offering ablaze with the burning fire of divine Union..."¹ It seeks only the pleasure of the Divine, the fulfilment of His Will and the deployment of His Love and Light upon earth. Its essential aspiration is to spend itself in God's service; but this service is not any mentally conceived work, altruistic or humanitarian, done in a spirit of disinterestedness; it is becoming a flexible and iridescent instrument for the perfect self-

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*

expression of the Divine. In her Prayer of the 27th July, 1914, the Mother prays to the Divine:—

“Let me lie down at Thy feet, merge into Thy heart, disappear in Thee, be blotted out in Thy beatitude; or rather be solely Thy servitor without pretending to anything else. I do not desire or aspire to anything more, I wish only to be Thy servitor.”

It is interesting to note the ascending scale of the aspiration, which, starting from “lying down at Thy feet”, rises, step by step, through merging in His heart, disappearing in Him, and—this is the traditional climax—being blotted out in His beatitude, to the superb pitch of a total holocaust—wishing “only to be Thy servitor”! Nothing can reveal better the essentially sacrificial nature of the psychic love than this high-souled aspiration of the Mother.

PART III

THE ODYSSEY OF THE PSYCHIC BEING

We have already had an understanding of the rationale of the soul's descent into material birth: it is to awaken consciousness in the giant nescience of the material existence, and effect a dynamic union between Spirit and Matter, rendering the latter a plastic and transparent

medium of the Spirit's multiple self-expression. But this stupendous evolutionary work cannot obviously be done in a single birth of the soul—the nature that emerges from Matter and develops through life and mind is much too dense and dark, much too inert and ignorant and frail and peccable to be lifted up at once to the divine stature. It has to be prepared,—its complex strands and elements to be purified, refined, impersonalised, integrated and organised round the central divine Presence. It is this long work of preparation that is done through the series of births of the individual soul. If a fulfilment was sought elsewhere than on this earth, this series of births would not impose itself; but if the earth is to be the scene of the highest divine fulfilment, as Sri Aurobindo holds, then a succession of rebirths in the human form seems to be the only possible means to it. But, it must be carefully noted, this succession of rebirths is not a machinery of repetition of the same personality. John, dead, is not born again, with his old nature and character unchanged, as Jack. If it were so, rebirth would be no means of evolution, but only a perpetuation of the same personality in different physical garbs. The logic of evolution, if we subscribe to it, demands, on the contrary, that each birth must mark a definite step forward, a bringing out of that which was involved or latent, and a working out of some of the complex potentialities of the evolving individual. It is true that this evolutionary advance cannot be in a straight line; it is necessarily in a spiral. Now it is one group of elements that are caught

up in its movement, now it is another; a part of the being is raised into light and another left tossing in darkness; and the part that is lifted in one life is dropped in another to work out some of its submerged or suppressed tendencies. It is an incalculable, winding movement, unceasing but unceasing, aiming at thoroughness and harmony, though appearing to drive only towards stray, specific results.

But how is this evolution effected, and under what agency is it led from stage to stage? If John is born immediately after his death as Jack, he can only remain what he was in his previous life—the mere fact of the assumption of a new physical form does not of itself argue any modification of the psychological make-up of his being. According to Sri Aurobindo, this agency is the psychic being, and its internatal odyssey is the process by which it rings the curtain up and down upon the decisive stages of the evolution of its nature. Death is only a signal, may be an abrupt and violent signal in a majority of cases, for a shift of scenes, and nothing more. When the gross physical body drops, the being passes into the subtle physical, and from there into the vital world. It exhausts its vital Karma in the vital world, and then passes on into the mental. When the mental formations are dissolved, like those of the vital, the soul goes to its own plane, called by Sri Aurobindo the psychic plane, for rest and assimilation of all its past experiences, acquired both on earth and on the planes of its post-mortal journey. When the period of rest is over,

and the work of assimilation complete, the soul or the psychic being emerges from its plane and assumes again, first, a mental sheath, that is to say, a mental body composed of those mental elements which it attracts towards itself by the characteristic force of its personality for the work of its next incarnation. Then it descends to the vital plane and, assuming an appropriate vital sheath, comes down through the subtle-physical into human birth. This is the general process, but it admits of many variations, some of which we may glance at in this essay.

The process seems to be simple enough, but unless we know the principle behind it, governing its purpose and functioning, we shall miss its real significance, and rest satisfied with a mechanistic view of it. There are two factors of the most primary and decisive importance to be taken into account in this connection. The one is the evolution of the psychic being from Matter upwards, following a certain curve of developing consciousness and nature; and the other is a particular line of divine consciousness influencing and guiding from above the evolution of the psychic being, and using its transient surface formations to further its own ulterior aim of self-manifestation in Matter. This particular line of divine consciousness, at once transcendent, universal and individual, seeks its perfect self-expression on earth through the psychic being, which is its projection here, and is the ultimate reason and justification of the whole complex process of the rebirth and the internal journey of the psychic being. It follows naturally from

a consideration of these two factors that rebirth is an evolutionary necessity and not a mere mechanism of Karma from which the soul has to escape into the immutable eternity of its unconditioned existence or non-existence. But for rebirth, the soul, instead of evolving into the mental consciousness of the human being, would have remained a perpetual prisoner of the subconscient obscurity; and if it ever rises from the mental twilight into the solar glory of the infinite supermind and reveals that glory in earthly life, as it seems destined to do (unless it elects to beat an oblique retreat), it can only be by the process of rebirth and the full utilisation of the opportunities rebirth makes accessible to it. The whole problem changes its aspect when viewed from the standpoint of evolution. The traditional idea subjects rebirth to the rigid determinism of the chain of causality, and regards it as a bondage and burden of the soul, from which an escape is the only release; while, according to Sri Aurobindo, rebirth is the only means of evolution and liberation, and once they are achieved, it becomes a means of divine self-expression and immortal enjoyment of unity in diversity—*sambhūtyāmṛtamaśnute*, as the Upanishads say. The liberated soul, the Jivanmukta, does not shrink from assuming any number of births for the fulfilment of the divine Will;—each birth of such a soul is, indeed, an invasion of light into the terrestrial darkness and an infusion of bliss into the mortal suffering.

The particular line of divine consciousness influencing and directing the evolution of the individual being is then

an important determining factor. This influence and direction come down to the evolving individual through the subliminal, and are rather occult to his unenlightened comprehension. If he lives mostly in his physical being, engrossed in the needs and cravings of his body and attached to his physical interests and relations, it is likely that his soul will not be able to go on a long journey of the supraphysical planes after the death of his present body,—the insistent material preoccupation of the nature will pull it down to earth. But if he has sufficiently developed his vital being and the mental; if he has, consciously or subconsciously, developed an affinity with any of the supraphysical worlds, his post-mortal sojourn in that world becomes almost a certainty. Take, for instance, the case of a philosopher. After his death he passes through the subtle-physical to the vital world, and unless there is a strong vital knot or twist somewhere in him, some deep-rooted desire or passion, his vital sheath will soon be dissolved, and he will proceed straight to the mental world where, relieved of the vital burden, he will be free to acquire various experiences. Because he has developed a mind of reflection and imagination, and an affinity with the mental world, he can live in that world more or less securely and fruitfully till the mental sheath is dissolved and the soul or the psychic being departs to its own plane to rest and assimilate its past experiences. It must be noted that the psychic being carries only the quintessence of its experiences to its abode of rest, having discarded and exhausted on the way much that was

necessary in its own time but irrelevant to the future set-up and growth; and it is this quintessence that goes, along with the new factors emerging into existence, to condition the shape and pattern of its next birth. But what are these new factors? They are the different lines of evolution that the psychic being takes up for development in its successive births. For, the psychic being is not bound by the chain of causality; it is the determining agent, in union with the divine Will in it, of the purpose and processes of its incarnations. It freely accepts the conditions and inherent limitations of the material life and the risks and hazards of its journey through the supraphysical planes to work out the tangled complex of possibilities without which the many-sided perfection and fulfilment of its destiny cannot be achieved.

Another thing to be marked here is that, as, on the one hand, the evolution of the psychic being is not the result of a mechanical interaction of kârmic forces, so, on the other, it is not an isolated phenomenon unrelated to the universal being and its evolution. The evolutionary development has "a universal as well as an individual aspect: the Universal develops the grades of its being and the ordered variation of the universality of itself in the series of its evolved forms of being; the individual soul follows the line of this cosmic series and manifests what is prepared in the universality of the Spirit. The universal Man, the cosmic Purusha in humanity, is developing in the human race the power that has grown into humanity from below it and shall yet grow to super-

mind and spirit and become the Godhead in man who is aware of his true integral self and the divine universality of his nature. The individual must have followed this line of development; he must have presided over a soul-experience in the lower forms of life before he took up the human evolution: as the One was capable of assuming in its universality these lower forms of the plant and the animal, so must the individual, now human, have been capable of assuming them in his previous stages of experience. He now appears as a human soul, the Spirit accepting the inner and outer form of humanity, but he is not limited by this form any more than he was limited by the plant or animal forms previously assumed by him; he can pass on from it to a greater self-expression in a higher scale of Nature.”¹

This seems to be a striking departure from the accredited theories of rebirth. Sri Aurobindo stresses two important points in this connection—points which have been curiously ignored up to now. The first is that the evolution of the individual is not an isolated movement following its own separate lines and sufficient unto itself. If Karma is one or Prakriti is one or the stream of flux is an indivisible universal dynamism, then there must be an interpenetration and interaction of their energies, precluding the possibility of any strict individual insularity. In this world of teeming relativities, subsisting in the Absolute, no single unit is sufficient unto itself,

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo—Book II. Chapter XX.

but all are divergent and convergent parts of the whole, acting and reacting upon one another, and developing by this mutual interaction. The Karma of an individual is not altogether his own exclusive concern, of which he alone reaps the harvest of corn or thorns; it is also the concern of the universal Being who, using the individual as one of His myriad channels of self-expression, exercises a presiding and directing control over his evolution. If the philosophy of Karma and rebirth is to be properly studied, it cannot be done except in the larger context of universal karma and universal manifestation. The second point of importance is that while, according to the current interpretations of Karma, rebirth comes to an end as soon as the mental consciousness of the individual abolishes itself in the spiritual, Sri Aurobindo regards rebirth as a means of ascent into "a higher scale of Nature." The mind is not the highest degree of consciousness accessible to man on earth; there are higher degrees and levels hierarchically graded and leading to the supreme consciousness, to which man can attain without abolishing himself. And that is, indeed, the intended crown and culmination of his evolution through birth and death—the full and perfect recovery and revelation of the Spirit in him. His experiences in successive lives, in changing forms, in different and often difficult circumstances; his after-death journey to the various worlds of life and mind; his exploration of their powers and principles, and their bearing upon his own development and perfection; his soul's assimilative and

preparative repose in its own world of peace and bliss—all these are but episodes in the long and chequered history of his soul's evolutionary progression from Matter to Spirit, its eventful odyssey. His humanity is a shifting mask, an immaculate divinity is his eternal essence and ultimate destiny.

THE PSYCHIC PREDETERMINATION

When the soul or the psychic being comes out of its assimilative repose, it decides upon the nature and conditions of its next incarnation in the light of the will and knowledge it has of its immediate evolutionary objective. Every essential factor, whether it is the place and the environment, or the family and the circumstances of its birth, or the events and experiences it will pass through, or the forces it will meet and combat, is foreseen and fore-ordained by the psychic being in consonance with the divine Will in it. Suffering, defeat, humiliation, destitution as well as happiness and honour and success are equally accepted by the psychic being as part of the mixed material of its self-evolution in earthly nature. The psychic being has an equal delight in all the vicissitudes of its temporal existence, and it profits by each of them. It turns failures into successes and defeats into potential elements of victory. That is why even though crushed by the forces of life, we are not altogether crushed out of existence—something seems ever to sustain and uphold us. Even when we walk through the darkest

night, a light, however dim, burns on within, and in the acutest agony of pain a hope of its end saves us from an utter collapse. The psychic being often accepts situations, which appear to be revolting or repellent to our mental or moral sense, in order to work out its manifestational possibilities. The human mind, tethered to its petty standards and concentrated on momentary interests, cannot fathom the direction of the psychic being and is, therefore, often perplexed or shocked by the turns events take in life. But if it can develop the spiritual vision, it will see that there is nothing like chance in life, no accidents,—everything is foreseen and predetermined by the Divine through the psychic, so far as the evolution of the human individual is concerned; and to be united with the psychic and live in it and from it is the only sun-lit path of progress for man.

THE PSYCHIC GUIDANCE

When spiritual knowledge develops, one begins to perceive that the proud idea of free-will which the human ego cherishes in its ignorance is nothing but a precious fiction. It is true that it is a practical and effective fiction, indispensable for the evolution of the individual in the ignorance, but one that has to be flung away as soon as he advances towards wider horizons, and is able to command a more or less clear view of the unity of universal existence and the sovereignty of the divine Will in it. This view does not reduce him to a helpless automaton, drained of

all will and initiative, and moved by the fiat and force of an alien supremacy. On the contrary, it unites him with the universal existence and eventually even with the transcendent through an identification with his real soul, the psychic being. In that unconfined consciousness he discovers that the will of his ego was but a puppet will, drunk with the cramping illusion of its separate freedom, and that his true being is not encased in a tiny formation of Nature, but embraces the whole universe and extends even beyond it. He finds his own freedom in the freedom of the Infinite, and his own will in the self-effectuating Will of the Eternal.

The perception of the psychic guidance and an ungrudging surrender to it is the surest way of spiritual advancement. Much of the struggle of the spiritual life, much of the twisting and torturing of nature, much of the fantastic mortifications imposed upon the body and the life-energies, is due to a lack of direct guidance of the psychic being. The mind, taking the lead in the sâdhanâ and straining to force the whole nature into its preconceived moulds, often ends by only maiming and disfiguring it. The excesses of asceticism have little of genuine spirituality in them—they are, more often than not, a gross wilful violence upon oneself and upon the Divine in oneself. And it is not only the average men, but even some of the great spiritual personalities, that have been responsible for this kind of deliberate violence upon their nature under the arbitrary lead of their self-righteous mind. But a simple surrender to the psychic guidance in faith and sincerity obviates

much of the difficulty of the path and makes of our evolution a spontaneous outflowing.

Here a note of caution seems to be called for. When we speak of the psychic guidance or the psychic leading, we do not mean the direction of what is called conscience. Conscience, as it is understood, is a mental and moral construction, a central crystallisation of the more or less conventional ideas of good and evil in the human mind. It is invariably coloured by the preferences and prepossessions of the mind, and, even at its best, cannot but reflect the dominant tendency of the being, though that tendency may not be apparent on the surface. To perceive the psychic guidance, one must have gone deep into oneself, beyond the mind and its ideas and principles, and the likes and dislikes of the heart. It is only in the serene silence of the mind and the heart, and not in their feverish striving, that the psychic guidance reveals itself. A purity in the being, attained by a renunciation of all desires and a clearance of all mental cobwebs, is the best condition for the still small voice to be heard and the slender revealing ray to be seen.

But even when we are not aware of the psychic guidance, it is always there behind the activities of our ego, but crossed, perverted and falsified by the egoistic misprision and interference. There is an evolutionary utility even in this distortion and falsification of the psychic guidance, entailing many a stumble and suffering, so long as the ego is the overt leader of the individual evolution;—the ego learns in the school of suffering and grows in strength by

defeat and failure. But when the being has evolved enough to overleap the egoistic bounds, nothing is more helpful than a contact with the psychic and a surrender to its infallible guidance. Any insistence on the realisation of one's mental principles and conceptions would mean, at this stage, a definite retardation or a regression, not an advance.

THE SELF-EXPRESSION OF THE PSYCHIC BEING

A progressive surrender of the whole being to the guidance of the psychic, which means, in effect, a surrender to the Divine and His Shakti through the unerring agency of the psychic, leads to a more and more unflawed self-expression of our essential divinity in life. The psychic being comes forward and makes its presence felt in our mind, our heart, our will and even in our body, removing all impurities and preparing our nature for the manifestation of the Divine. The sway of the psychic being in our nature is a guarantee of peace and purity and love and joy, and when the parts of our nature are moulded into the image of the psychic, our life becomes a triumphal march to the Love and Light of the Supreme. A boundless love and devotion for the Divine, a complete self-consecration to His Will, a spontaneous love and sympathy for all beings, a concrete experience of the unity of all existence and a growing poise in that unity, a keen sense of beauty and harmony and a limpid placidity and plasticity

in the entire nature, are some of the principal elements of the self-expression of the psychic being.

It may appear that this is the very summit of the soul's perfection; but in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga this psychic conversion and transformation of the nature is but the first decisive achievement, and beyond it lie the ascents and descents and conquests which culminate in an integral union with the Divine, and His manifestation upon earth. The Divine completes what the psychic being commences.

CHAPTER X

THE HIGHER NATURE AND THE LOWER

THE relation between the higher nature and the lower is of capital importance in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. If a shuffling off of all nature were the aim, the postulate of the higher Nature would not be called for—the Sâṅkhya position would be perfectly valid for the purpose. The Nature of the three *guṇas* would be regarded as the sole Nature responsible for life and creation and the soul's bondage to them, and a withdrawal of the soul from her its final release and salvation. The passive status of the liberated individual soul, as in the Sâṅkhya, or its traceless merger in the eternal Immutable, as in the later Vedānta, would be the crowning achievement of all spiritual endeavour.

But the aim of the Integral Yoga is not a rejection, but a transformation of Nature for the manifestation of the Divine in the material world. A naked soul, divested of all nature, cannot surely manifest either itself or the Divine. It must have a nature through which it can pour out into life the inexhaustible riches of the Spirit it holds within itself—it must have an executive and expressive medium.

But how can this bounded Nature of the three *guṇas* (qualitative modes of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*), afflicted

with perpetual instability and working within narrow confines, reflect or reveal the infinite Divine? Even *sattwa*, the highest of her *guṇas*, is a limited and limiting principle; it binds the being by the modicum of happiness and the modified light it imparts to it, as the *Gitâ* puts it. Within the cramping formula of this Nature of the three *guṇas*, there can, therefore, be no freedom, no recovery and expression of the soul's universal and transcendent attributes. This Nature of the three *guṇas* has to be transcended.

Where will this transcendence lead? Is there a dynamic principle above this Nature of the three *guṇas*—a principle of divine dynamism, unfettered by the lower *guṇas*, and working in the infallible light of an infinite knowledge? If there were no such principle, transcendence would only lead to self-extinction in a limitless Void or a worldless Immutable. But the *Gitâ*, following the Vedic and the Upanishadic tradition, speaks of a higher Nature, *parā prakṛti*, which is superior to the three *guṇas*, and by which this entire universe is sustained and upheld. The lower Nature is a derivative of the higher, controlled by the Will and Force of the higher, and yet given sufficient autonomy to work out, in its own way, the tangled possibilities of its evolutionary ignorance. The control is veiled and indirect,—the lower must go seeking and blundering through darkness till, surrendered and consecrated, it is washed clean of its impurities, and caught up in the freedom and glory of the higher.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is based upon the essential truth of this double Nature—the higher and the lower, *parā* and *aparā*. His contention against the world-shunning ascetic tendency is that, if this lower Nature that binds and darkens the soul is derived from the higher, it can certainly be converted back into that; and, instead of the dualities and discords that it displays, it can be made to manifest the Light and Peace and Bliss, the Unity and Harmony of the Nature of the Divine. To cast away Nature because, in its present formulation, it is ignorant and discordant, is to cast away altogether the possibilities of God's manifestation in life. Divisions and dissonances are the transitional terms of a life which is evolving from a base of dark inconscience. They have to be faced, grappled with, conquered, and converted to their spiritual counterparts, and not fled away from and left in their undisputed sway over human life. Death, division and discord are the legacy of our origin in the Ignorance; we have to pass through them so long as we live in the Ignorance, in the separative consciousness of the ego—*avidyayā mr̥tyum tīrtwā*. But is it not partly because of them that we aspire and yearn for an existence of unity, harmony and immortality? Is it not the recurrent wrench of death, the distressing limitation and incapacity resulting from division, and the confusing and tormenting discords of life that drive us towards their very opposites? But where is that existence of unity, harmony and immortality to be found? Is it to be discovered and attained

beyond all Nature and life? Then the solution of life's problems, if there be any, can only lie in an extinction of life itself, and not in its conquest and transfiguration. The persistent instinct of mankind has, however, always been towards the discovery of a solution of life's problems in life itself, whatever may have been the aspiration and endeavour of exceptional individuals impatiently avid of the Beyond. The one solid good they have done for humanity is to point again and again towards the essential and eternal truth of its existence. But the instinct of man for a victorious solution of all life's problems can be fulfilled, not by a discarding of Nature, but by an ascent to the Supernature, and a radical transformation of the lower by the power of the higher. In the very heart of division lies the secret of unity; behind the black mask of death is the unfading light of immortality, and suffering is only "a violent backwash of the waters of universal delight." An ascent of the human consciousness to the Supernature, and a descent of the Supernature into human consciousness and nature can alone release these divine principles and accomplish the evolutionary purpose of the material existence.

WHAT IS THE HIGHER NATURE?

By the higher Nature to which we have to climb and by the power of which we have to transform the lower, Sri Aurobindo does not mean the spiritualised mental nature. It is not a perfect flowering of the *sāttwic* nature

of a relative poise and purity and light and happiness, which is the common idea of it. *Sattwa*, even at its best, is a mental quality, belonging to the lower nature; it can be a wide gate opening on the Infinite, but in itself it is a dealer in finite virtues, and cannot move in the infinitudes of Spirit. By Supernature Sri Aurobindo means the authentic, eternal Nature of the Supreme, the Consciousness-Force of *saccidānanda* as the creatrix of the world. Supernature is the supramental Nature, the self-Nature (*prakṛtim swām*) of the Divine. In Supernature there is no duality of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*—they are one. Consciousness and Force, Knowledge and Will, status and dynamism form the warp and woof of the same infinite and indivisible existence. The Supernature or *parā prakṛti* contains the spiritual counterparts of the three lower *guṇas*—what is *sattwa* in the lower Nature is there *jyotiḥ* or *prakāś*, *rajas* is there *tejas* or *tapas*, a self-flowing force of all-achieving potency; and *tamas* or inertia is there *śānti* or *śama*, an eternity of fathomless peace. The three lower *guṇas* are, therefore, derived from *jyotiḥ*, *tejas* and *śānti*. In the Supernature these three spiritual qualities are not in constant instability, as are the lower *guṇas* in our ignorant nature; they form a creative trinity, acting in a luminous harmony. Interminable activity wells out of an impregnable peace and calm, the Creative Word leaps out of an eternal silence.

In the higher Nature all knowledge is knowledge by identity. The object of knowledge is one with the subject itself, a part or aspect or facet of the subject, or a principle

of its infinite being, or a form of its manifold self-becoming. It is perceived in the subject, and not outside it; and this perception is not only of the invariable essence of the object, but also of the truth of its varying appearances. Unity and diversity do not stand out as contraries in that all-comprehensive knowledge of the higher Nature, they represent and reveal an indivisible existence at once one and multiply self-reproducing. Nothing can be hidden from this knowledge, because it embraces all existence, phenomenal and eternal. To it past, present and future are not separate segments of time, but one continuous flow arising from the Timeless and disappearing in it. Unlike the essential knowledge, *jñāna*, attained by absorbed contemplation or trance, in which the relativities of the world are drowned and lost in the blinding lustre of the bare Absolute, the knowledge in the higher Nature or Supernature reveals also the truth of the dynamic principles and potentialities of life, the secrets and mysteries of creation, and sees in each finite object, each little ripple of energy, the living Face and Force of the Infinite. It is for this comprehensiveness of its vision that it is called *vijñāna*, in which the Divine is known not only in His immutable being, but also in his mobile and multitudinous becoming.

In the higher Nature there is no disparity between knowledge and will, as we find in our mortal nature. Knowledge and Will are both ingrained in the very stuff and substance of its infinite consciousness. Whatever truth of the eternal existence floats up in its knowledge,

finds an omnipotent Will ready to realise and express it in terms of Time and Space. It never happens that the Will falls short of the full realisation, or that the Knowledge lacks the plenary force. But the Will works through a Law and a network of self-imposed conditions and limitations, which are inscrutable to the human mind, but impeccably designed to further and fulfil its universal ends. There is nothing capricious or arbitrary in its action, but there is certainly a sovereign freedom in the creation of materials and conditions, and in the adoption of the means which are intended to work upon them. An unfailing Light guides the steps of an unfaltering Force.

In the higher Nature all action is a spontaneous self-expression, an emergence and a deployment of the possibilities inherent in the infinite Being. It is a free and flexible play of illimitable energies, faultlessly following the rhythms of the dynamic Truth and the silent impulsion of the supreme Will, the Truth-Will. Therefore, action, instead of being a bondage, is there the thrilled self-expression of an infinite freedom. It is an undammed flow of the self-manifesting Force of the Divine. There being no separative ego, there is no desire, or attachment to any action and its result. All individual action is an indivisible part of the universal action, and inevitably contributes to the self-fulfilment of the All-Being. And yet the individual persists as one of the multiple centres of the transcendent Consciousness, participating at once in the transcendent freedom and the universal movement, in unity and

multiplicity, and finding its own fulfilment in the fulfilment of all. Light, Force, Bliss and Beauty reveal their inexhaustible riches in a mounting harmony of varied relations, and descend towards the earth for a progressive self-embodiment in Matter. Absolute freedom, absolute purity and absolute peace base the incalculable movement of the rapture-drunk Force of the Supernature.

This, then, is the higher Nature, *parā prakṛti*, from which our lower Nature of evolving ignorance is derived, and into which it is destined to be converted. Once we accept this truth, we realise the sublime folly of the ascetic repression and eventual rejection of all Nature. The precipitate impatience of the human mind, defeated and distracted by the complex problems of life and its conflicting forces, assumes a spectacular loftiness when it drives straight towards the cutting of the Gordian knot—the complete sundering of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The individual soul's retreat into itself or into the inactive Brahman is regarded as its release, and Nature is left unredeemed in her triumphant darkness, swaying the destinies of countless captive souls. But the truth of the two Natures, the higher and the lower, which Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga affirms and uses as a lever of ascent into the fullness of the Life Divine, is not unfamiliar to the central body of Indian spiritual thought. It is implicit also in the thought of some of the old religions and philosophies of the world. But its practical application to spiritual life, which was the core of the Vedic spiritual culture, has long been forgotten or ignored, with the result that

by Nature is meant only the lower Nature of the three *guṇas*, which fetters and obscures the soul; and, naturally enough, the souls that feel the agony of this shackled existence strive to slough off this Nature and depart into their incorruptible essence. It is a pregnant recovery of the ancient knowledge to insist, as Sri Aurobindo does, on the momentous truth of the higher dynamic Nature, and the inevitable sublimation and transformation of the lower into it as the end of evolution. In the light of this truth, the theory of illusionism (*māyāvāda*) itself becomes illusory, and life is affirmed as not only real, but divinely and fruitfully real—real in its emergent values, real in its developing powers, and creatively real in the fullness of self-expression to which it leads the evolving soul. Starting from the darkness of Matter, the lower Nature justifies her existence by an eventual conversion of herself into the higher, and an unobscured revelation of the infinite and immortal Spirit, her indwelling Master and Playmate. The individual soul then enjoys infinity and immortality in its uninterrupted union and communion with the Divine, even while it manifests Him in the setting of the material existence and fulfils His Will in every detail of its earthly life.

This ascent to the higher divine Nature is the supreme work of human life, both individual and collective. The collective lower Nature of the mental man has to be transformed and converted into the higher, so that man as a race may take the next higher step in evolution, and live and work on earth as a supramental being, a vessel of the

gnostic Truth and Light and Bliss, instead of struggling and suffering in the dim light of his half-enlightened, egoistic mental consciousness. This divine perfection of the human race is the logical outcome of our acceptance of two truths upon which the whole conception of the Life Divine is founded: (1) the truth of the soul's evolution from the inconscience of Matter to the super-conscience of Spirit and (2) the truth of the sublimation and transmutation of the lower Nature into the higher. The unquenchable aspiration in the human mind for a harmonious perfection in individual and corporate life points to such a consummation; for, man, by the sole power of his mind, has not been able to achieve any perfection in his life. "We seek to construct systems of knowledge and systems of life by which we can arrive at some perfection of our existence, some order of right relations, right use of mind, right use and happiness and beauty of life, right use of the body. But what we achieve is a constructed half-rightness mixed with much that is wrong and unlovely and unhappy; our successive constructions, because of the vice in them and because mind and life cannot rest permanently anywhere in their seeking, are exposed to destruction, decadence, disruption of their order, and we pass from them to others which are not more finally successful or enduring, even if on one side or another they may be richer and fuller or more rationally plausible. It cannot be otherwise, because we can construct nothing which goes beyond our nature; imperfect, we cannot construct perfection, however wonderful

may seem to us the machinery our mental ingenuity invents, however externally effective. Ignorant, we cannot construct a system of entirely true and fruitful self-knowledge or world-knowledge: our science itself is a construction, a mass, of formulas and devices; masterful in knowledge of processes and in the creation of apt machinery, but ignorant of the foundations of our being and of world-being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life.¹

"It is only if our nature develops beyond itself, if it becomes a nature of self-knowledge, mutual understanding, unity, a nature of true being and true life that the result can be a perfection of ourselves and our existence, a life of true being, a life of unity, mutuality, harmony, a life of true happiness, a harmonious and beautiful life....If an evolution of being is the law, then what we are seeking for is not only possible but part of the eventual necessity of things. It is our destiny to manifest and become that supernature,—for it is the nature of our true self, our still occult, because unevolved, whole being.²

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, because it seeks the perfection and fulfilment of the whole being of man, provides for the liberation and supramentalisation of his soul, on the one hand, and the liberation and supramental transformation of his nature, on the other. It is aware of the tremendous difficulty of its endeavour. It is fully

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

aware of the fate that overtook the powerful and prodigious experiment of Tantra. But it has hitched its wagon to the supramental Sun, and, by a perfect use of the right relation between the two natures, promises to achieve its end, which is the inevitable end of evolution itself. What appears impossible to the limited capacity of the human mind need not be impossible to the omnipotence of the divine Force, the supreme Mother. What our personal effort may fail to achieve, the Mother's force will surely accomplish, if we can realise an integral surrender to it; for, that Force is no other than the *viññāna śakti* or the creative Force of the Divine Himself.

And still the fact remains that the work of purifying and transforming the lower nature into the higher is a long and extremely arduous work, entailing, as it does, first, the purification of each element, each fibre, each energy of the complex human nature by a synthetic self-discipline through knowledge, love and works in a growing attitude of self-surrender; and, next, the transformation of them all by the descent of the authentic supramental Force and a raising of the whole integrated nature into the Supernature.

We shall now proceed to consider the elaborate work of the purification of human nature as it is done in the Integral Yoga.

CHAPTER XI

THE PURIFICATION OF NATURE

PURIFICATION has a special sense in the Integral Yoga. In the other Yogas except the Tantra, it means the simplification or stilling of most of the functions of *antaḥkaraṇa*, which comprises *citta* or the basic consciousness, *manas* or the sense-mind, *buddhi* or the intelligence, and *ahaṅkāra* or the ego. There are different processes in the different Yogas for the purpose of this stilling and simplification, but the common, ultimate objective is a release of the central being from the complex working of nature, and its union either with the immutable Brahman or with God or with its own unconditioned Self or Status, as the case may be. If the nature has been purified enough to let the central consciousness sink into its depths or soar above the body, the principal spiritual end of purification is taken to have been achieved, and the ethical being sees to it that the purity and peace experienced in the depths or on the heights are reflected to a certain extent in the character and conduct of life. That is about all one ordinarily understands by purification. But for the Integral Yoga it is utterly inadequate; for the aim we pursue is not only the liberation of the soul but also of nature, culminating in the supramental transformation as the *sine qua non* of divine manifestation. It is no

simplification that is attempted, but an aggrandisement and enrichment of the whole nature by an awakening and quickening of all its faculties, including even those that are normally latent or only half active. Instead of stripping the soul bare and carrying it alone to the Infinite, as do the other Yogas, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo offers the soul and nature both into the hands of the Divine for their liberation and perfection, and their effective utilisation for the fulfilment of His Will in the material world. Purification has, therefore, a much wider sweep and a deeper plunge in the Integral Yoga than elsewhere, and becomes almost a process of a rich and complex perfection. Each part of the being is taken up in itself, along with all its faculties and energies, and cleaned and developed; and its hidden potentialities are brought out and harnessed to the spiritual purpose of life. And it is taken up at the same time in all its relations with the other parts; its egoistic moulds are broken, its closed passages opened up, its functional defects remedied, and its basic characteristics quickened into a spontaneous concert with those of the other parts. In this way, a great organic harmony and homogeneity, and an unimpeded correlation and interaction are established in the whole nature, replacing the present discords and resistances. Besides, with the progress of the Yoga and an increasing action of the Mother's Force, there takes place a descent of the higher Light and Power and Peace and Purity, which begin to effect a radical change in the parts of our nature and sublimate them into

their spiritual equivalents. We shall have to consider some of the important details of this change in the subsequent chapters, when we follow the purification of the different parts of human nature.

THE INCANDESCENT BACKGROUND OF PURIFICATION

In the Integral Yoga, the urge to purification is not ethical or idealistic. It is not a practice of virtue that is sought in it, nor a remoulding of nature to a set mental pattern. The essential urge to purification comes from a perception, growing in clarity and intensity as the Yoga progresses, of the soul or the psychic being. In fact, a real, dynamic start in this Yoga is usually preceded by a perception, be it even in a flash, of the immaculate purity and imperturbable peace of the soul, its luminous whiteness and unclouded joy. The consciousness of the Yogi begins to feel an irresistible attraction towards the object of this perception, and a corresponding recoil from what is contrary to it in the nature. So long as purification proceeds by mental construction or social conventions, it is an arduous affair, and not unoften rather painful. The whole consciousness of the individual broods over the impurities, wrestles with them, strives to grub them up, only to find that they are much too subtle for it, and much too deep-rooted to be thus dislodged. A constant fight leaves a sense of bitterness and aridity in the nature, and the greatest achievement of this kind of mental purification is a certain lull or a subdued or

subsoil working of the lower energies; hardly anything more. But if a perception of the soul precedes and initiates the movement of purification, the consciousness of the individual automatically feels a magnetic pull towards the object of that perception, and a centre of gravity is, as it were, created there to counteract the lower gravitation. One begins to see more and more clearly in the radiating light of the soul the intricate mechanism of one's nature, and receives a developing guidance from within in regard to its purification. This purification is an ungrudging rejection of all that seems to conflict with the peace and purity of the soul—a renunciation which is not at all painful, but rather joyous, spontaneous, enthusiastic. There may be, from time to time, a period when a pang or a twinge is felt in the process of renunciation, or some desire or attachment seems to cling on with the tenacity of a leech; but that is usually a passing phase, unless, of course, the inner or higher attraction, which is another name for aspiration, is clouded or obscured, and the consciousness of the sâdhaka falls spinning back into the beaten tracks of the old habitual energies.

What is of paramount importance in the process of purification as followed in the Integral Yoga is (1) a steadily growing vision of the psychic being or the soul and (2) an implicit faith and trust in the divine guidance. The more one looks within, the more one is enamoured of the soul and its tranquil glory. And to be enamoured of the soul is to tend towards it. When one fixes one's gaze on the immaculate psychic, and contemplates its

serene, smiling radiance, its intense, flaming love for the Divine, its infinite tenderness and sweetness, its boundless patience and forbearance with the evils of earthly life, and its consciousness of unity with all beings and things, one finds, deep in oneself, an iron will to reproduce all that glory in the parts of one's nature. This will to the reproduction of the glory of the psychic in the instrumental nature characterises the follower of the Integral Yoga. He cannot be content with a surface polish and refinement of his nature, nor even with an ethical or religious modification of it, which leaves its roots untouched. He wants nothing short of a rebirth of the psychic in his active nature, *dwijatwa*, and that too 'only as a preliminary purification and transformation, leading eventually to the divine supramental perfection. In proportion as the psychic influence permeates the nature, and the consciousness of each part of the being is released from the toils of ignorance, a limitless love and devotion for the Divine grows in his being, and a corresponding insistence to purify the nature in all its elements. Identifying himself with the psychic being, as much as he can, he looks into his nature, as if he was looking into something outside himself, and is, therefore, much better able than the psychologist or the psycho-analyst to study it in all its protean moods and energies. It is in this identification with the psychic being that the Yogi scores over the psychologist, for it gives him a rare vantage ground, a secure poise, from where he can observe and deal with even the least movements of his nature. The

psycho-analyst tries to study human nature from within it, himself a part of it, and helplessly subject to its shifting modes. It is, as it were, a study of the sea by one who is himself buffeting with its waves,—a fruitless endeavour. But a Yogi is one who has taken his stand in consciousness upon the shore, and, away from the waves and whirlpools, can command a clear view of the sea in front. The psycho-analyst would do well to take a leaf out of the Yogi's book, if he means to get beyond his tentative, empirical methods and shaky hypotheses. He cannot know human nature, discover its secret motor forces, and study the subtle interrelations of its parts, until he has himself struggled out of it and taken his stand upon something which is independent of it and yet its master and guide. What is gleaned by his present empirical methods, based upon the quick-sand of sense-data and imaginative and conjectural deductions is, even at its best, a cumulative experience of some of the more or less gross movements of human nature—an experience which is unavoidably conditioned by the bias of his mind and his limited faculties of observation, reasoning and imagination. His individuality enters so largely into his experiments that it is no wonder that Freud and Adler and Jung and others vary so vitally in their basic concepts and final conclusions.

It may not be long before the earnest students of human psychology discover, as a few of them have already begun to perceive dimly, that there are two indispensable pre-requisites of a faultless study of nature:

(1) transcendence and (2) identification. One who has not transcended one's own nature, which comes to the same thing as transcending human nature, cannot command a full and clear view of it; and it is not by the normal mental faculties, but by an inner identification that this study can be made to bear perfect fruit. The whole subtle machinery of human nature can best be studied by taking a stable poise beyond it, either behind or above, and projecting a part of one's consciousness into it which, by identification, can precisely and accurately register all its fine and gross vibrations. The knowledge of the self or soul must then precede any true knowledge of nature. It is only in the light and the context of the infinite that the truth of the finite can be properly read. It is the Eternal alone that can explain and justify the temporal. That is why we find such an astonishing unanimity in the essential experiences and discoveries of the yogis and mystics, whose psychological researches proceed upon the granite basis of self-knowledge. If there are differences among them, they are due to their pursuit of different lines of knowledge, or to the differing scope and range of their experiences, but not to the fundamental elements of the experiences themselves. Take, for instance, the common postulates of Indian philosophy: the five material elements, the five *tanmātrās*, the three *guṇas* of nature and their intricate interaction, the infinity and immortality of the self etc. There is no vital difference of opinion in regard to these basic truths and realities of existence, because they are truths of

universal experience, and admit of no doubt and denial. Most of the differences in regard to them are but differences of formulation, of intellectual expression and exposition. When we realise the essential truths, we realise them in the same way, and it is the light of these truths that irradiates and reveals the reality of all things in the world. But the quintessence of all truths is the Self or Spirit, the sole eternal Reality; and it is only by knowing it, by knowing the omnipresent *ātman*, that all can be known—*tasmin vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātam bhavati*. This is the declaration of ancient knowledge, which no science or philosophy can ever challenge.

When, therefore, we retire into the incandescent background, we find ourselves in a position to watch and study all the mechanism and functioning of our complex nature, and there is no possibility of anything escaping our vision. Not only the surface movements, but also those that are most secret and subtle and elusive, not only the actions and reactions of our nature, but also their remote and recondite causes, lie completely bared to our spiritual sight, and we feel that we have the power either to stop them altogether or considerably modify or even transform them. A constant consciousness of our soul or self is a constant guarantee against a blindness to or a false identification with the obscure movements of our lower nature. Poised in the psychic consciousness, or even basking in its light, we feel each impure or ignorant movement of our nature, not as the puritan feels it, as something sinful and execrable which has to be

stified or slashed, but rather as a wrong or perverted play of energy casting a sombre shadow upon the glory of the psychic. It is this contrast, this living, poignant contradiction between the freedom, purity, peace and bliss of the psychic being and the shackled littleness and turbidity of our normal nature that supplies the unfailing motive force to the work of yogic purification. For, the psychic being has a will in it, a will of fire to manifest the Divine in its nature, and it cannot rest till it has converted and transformed its ignorant earthly nature into the divine nature.

THE TWO CATEGORIES OF IMPURITY

When we study the nature of our impurities, we find that they can be divided into two categories, born of two different causes. The first category is derived from the separative ignorance which has been the nature of our past evolution. Every element and every energy of every part of our nature works on the basis of a separative egoism, combining and conflicting with others according as it suits its self-interest, conscious or subconscious. This egoistic separativeness generates wrong will and perverse movements, which we call evil, and entails recurrent suffering. Individual human nature, which should be one organic whole, moving and acting harmoniously among other individual wholes, is, under the separative influence of the ego, at war with itself and at war with others. This is a prolific source of

impurity in the nature, and can be eliminated only by the recovery of a dynamic consciousness of the unity of all existence.

The second category of impurity derives from the successive process of evolution. Life emerges from Matter, and is limited and conditioned in its development by the inertia and obscurity of Matter—it cannot blossom in an unconditioned freedom. Its sparkling *élan* is clouded and curbed by the dark weight of Matter. Similarly Mind, evolving from Life, is infected with Life's desires and shaken with its passions. Its intelligence cannot calmly contemplate the truth of existence, its imagination cannot wing straight towards the Infinite, its reason cannot hold the balance even between two contending persons or objects, because of the transfusion of Life's emotional turbidities and Matter's inertia and obscurity into it, and the general sway Life and Matter exercise over it. Each part has, therefore, to be delivered from the cramping hold of the others, and given the utmost autonomy to develop in its own natural way, and at the same time in happy and harmonious relations with all. This can be perfectly done only when the Mother's Force begins to act directly and freely in the nature, bringing down more and more of its supramental omnipotence.

THE THREE STEPS OF PURIFICATION

The beginning of the movement of purification is generally marked by a defiant persistence of the principal impu-

rities, as if they seemed to doubt the sincerity and steadfastness of our will. They persist out of a dogged reluctance of the intransigent vital and a general inertia of the physical consciousness, and refuse to cease or change. In the parlance of Yoga, it is called the unwillingness of *prakṛti* to alter the nature of the play in which the being or *puruṣa* has so long been taking delight. She reckons upon a renewal of his past sanction. But if a steady will is bent upon the elimination of the impurities, and no indulgence or latitude is given them, they begin to take us seriously and prepare for a fight.

The second step is characterised by their resistance to our will. An unheeding persistence gives place to a determined resistance, sometimes aggressive and sometimes defensive. It implies an alertness and a resentful violence on the part of *prakṛti*, who begins to perceive that the *puruṣa* in us is irrevocably set upon a shifting of the play, and that he wants now a play of light instead of the play of darkness. Here, again, an intense and inflexible will and a total dependence on the Mother's Force are the best means of conquest: they wear down all resistance.

At the third step, the impurities, worn and overpowered, wobble out of the nature, but may still be seen on the prowl in the environing atmosphere. They bide their time, and, taking advantage of the least opening or any unguarded moment on our part, rush again into our nature. This is called recurrence. It can be very tiresome, if we are not always vigilant and surrendered. A complete immunity from this recurrence can be assured only when the impu-

rities have been flung far back into the universal nature from which they came, and nothing in our individual nature ever responds to them again in any way.

THE INITIAL BASIS OF PURIFICATION

The initial basis of purification is a poise of quiet detachment from the flux of nature. Identifying oneself with the soul, one must be able to say in regard to the forces of the lower nature: "They are not mine, I have nothing to do with them. They belong to the universal nature of ignorance." This detachment should be accompanied by a withdrawal of sanction from the obscure movements of nature, and an uncompromising rejection of them. One must accept only those movements that are conducive to spiritual progress, and quietly reject—not repress—the rest. This is the poise of the witness or *sākṣī puruṣa* who is also the approver and giver of the sanction, *anumantā*. The calm will of the central being, rejecting the ignorant working of the lower nature, is the most important factor in the process of purification as followed in the Integral Yoga. No wrestling with the impurities, no panicky obsession with them, no concession or quarter to them in any form; but a silent, unflagging will of rejection, mighty and masterful in its confident reliance on the Force of the Divine Mother, is the secret of purification. The more calm one is in one's rejection of impurities and withdrawal of sanction from them, the stronger one becomes. The Vaishnavic and Christian pre-occupations

tion with sin and repentance and self-chastisement is a pietistic religious attitude which, though partly successful in exceptional individuals, usually ends by weakening the nature and engendering in it a sort of morbid timidity and inferiority complex. It is far from being a Yogic attitude, which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is one of a firm poise in the inalienable purity and freedom of the *puruṣa*. Once this untrembling attitude of the detached *puruṣa* is resolutely taken and adhered to in the teeth of all persistence and recurrence of the natural impurities, purification will put on the appearance of an automatic catharsis, a spontaneous working out of the wrong movements and erring energies, and a gradual cleansing of nature. What is of capital importance at this stage is a sincere and sustained personal effort to surrender the whole nature to the Mother's Force, so that the Force can enter into the nature and effect the purification in its own infallible way. The sooner the lead in the work of purification is transferred from the *sâdhaka's* mind to the Mother's Force, the better for the *sâdhanâ*. But the will of the *sâdhaka*, concentrated upon the purification, must seek a greater and greater attunement to the Will of the Mother through aspiration, rejection of all desires, and total surrender. There must be an active participation of the *sâdhaka's* will in the Mother's work, for this participation is a very effective collaboration, and hastens all realisation. Detachment, willed co-operation, and surrender are the three strands of the initial basis of purification in the Integral Yoga.

THE FINAL BASIS OF PURIFICATION

As surrender progresses and tends to become integral, the personal effort of the sâdhaka gives place to a direct action of the Mother's higher Force. Undisturbed by the mental preferences and vital self-will of the sâdhaka, the Force deals freely with the impurities and follows its own inscrutable way of swift and radical purification, the sâdhaka's will in tune with the Mother's. The detached, witnessing poise of the *puruṣa* tends to merge into that of the *bhoktā* (enjoyer) and *īśwara* (Lord) of nature, as the union with the Mother progresses. A whirlwind process of purification follows the transfer of the charge of the Yoga into the hands of the Mother—a process which the human mind can never understand. It takes all the faith of one's being to lend oneself to this immense work of purification, which covers not only the waking and active parts of nature, but also those that are submerged and veiled. "The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine *śakti*. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension; the measures of her movement are not its measures. Bewildered by the swift alternation of her many different personalities, her making of rhythms and her breaking of rhythms, her accelerations of speed and her retardations, her varied ways of dealing with the problem of one and of another, her taking up and dropping now of this line and now of that one and her gathering of

them together, it will not recognise the way of the Supreme Power when it is circling and sweeping upwards through the maze of the Ignorance to a supernal Light....The Mother is dealing with the Ignorance in the field of the Ignorance....Partly she veils and partly she unveils her knowledge and her power, often holds them back from her instruments and personalities and follows that she may transform them the way of the seeking mind, the way of the aspiring psychic, the way of the battling vital, the way of the imprisoned and suffering physical nature....There are conditions that have been laid down by a Supreme Will, there are many tangled knots that have to be loosened and cannot be cut abruptly asunder....The Divine Consciousness and Force are there and do at each moment the thing that is needed in the conditions of the labour, take always the step that is decreed and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come."¹

This is the sovereign movement of purification which goes hand in hand with the developing work of transformation, and imperceptibly shades off into it. It is a movement of unravelling the master knots of nature, of healing its basic divisions, of restoring its essential order and harmony, and opening all its parts to the supramental afflatus. An exclusive reliance on the Mother's Force and its direct, unimpeded and pervasive action in the nature constitutes the final basis of purification. If the first basis prepares our liberation, the second consummates

¹ The Mother by Sri Aurobindo.

it. But liberation is only the initial decisive step in the Integral Yoga, not its culmination. When *śuddhi* or purification is complete, *mukti* or liberation follows naturally; and after liberation there is a divine possession and enjoyment of Nature and its eventual supramental perfection and utilisation as the final object of the soul's incarnation—*bhukti* and *siddhi*.

CHAPTER XII

MIND AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART I

MANY things are meant by the general term mind. It is indiscriminately used for the intellect, intelligence, reason, thought, understanding etc., and is even stretched to cover feeling and emotion. It is, therefore, essential that it should be properly defined and classified, its various functions described with precision, and their hierarchical order clearly indicated, if we are to embark upon the work of its Yogic as distinguished from ethical purification. A certain amount of detailed knowledge of the psychology of our nature is a great help in the beginning of the spiritual life, and saves us many a stumble and bewilderment. When the inner light dawns, we can dispense with the mental knowledge and know the whole working of our nature by spiritual vision and direct experience.

THE CHITTA OR THE BASIC CONSCIOUSNESS

What is mind and how does it evolve? The term *antah-karana*, employed by most of the schools of Hindu philosophy, is wide enough to comprehend all the principal

subjective developments of the instrumental being of man in the Ignorance. It comprises, as we said in the last chapter, *citta* or the basic consciousness, *manas* or the sense-mind, *buddhi* or the intelligence, and *ahaṅkāra* or the ego-sense. *Citta* is the primal consciousness, the basic stuff of our psychological being, as it evolves from the material inconscience. It is mostly subconscient and mechanical in its action, which is of two kinds: (1) passive and receptive, and (2) active and formative. The *citta* passively receives all impacts and impressions, and “stores them in an immense reserve of passive subconscient memory on which the mind as an active memory can draw.”¹ Even the things which escape the attention of our mind, but have been the object of our outer senses, are snapped by the *citta*. These impressions form a chaotic jumble in the *citta*, from which they surge up into our surface consciousness, in waking, and often in sleep, in various fantastic combinations. This action of the *citta* is automatic and unpredictable. The active and formative part of the *citta* is responsible for most of the impulses and habits of our aboriginal animal nature and the automatic emotional reactions, *citta vṛttis*, which rise in response to the outer stimuli. In plant life the *citta* is the source of the sensations of pleasure and pain, comfort and discomfort, which have more a nervous than a feeling value. In the animal, a life-mind and a sense-mind evolve out of this primal *citta*, and the nervous-physical sensation

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*—by Sri Aurobindo.

of the plant life assumes a mental hue and acquires a rudimentary mental value. And yet the mind that has developed in the animal is involved in the action of the senses, and the hungers and craving of the physical life—it cannot get beyond them. From this welter of the *citta*, instincts come and impulses; by it are formed the vital and physical habits of the animal, which are nothing better than crystallisations of the *samskāras* or impressions of its past evolution with certain characteristic evolutionary modifications. The *citta* is an immense sea of amorphous or half-formed elements, out of which develop the various faculties and functions of the evolving being.

MANAS OR THE SENSE-MIND

In man the *citta* develops the life-mind and the sense-mind to a much greater extent than in the animal. The sense-mind throws out a thought-mind, a very elementary state of which we find in some of the advanced species of animals; but in the generality of men this thought-mind is tied to the sense-mind and can, with a greater precision, be called a sensational thought-mind. This sensational thought-mind works on the basis of the data of the senses, and cannot rise superior to them and move in an ether of unfettered thinking. Or, it works on the basis of the subjective reactions generated in the *citta* by the outer impacts. But in either case, it is absolutely dependent upon the senses and limited to their reports. It is nothing more than a slight improvement on the mind of the

animal—only more elaborately and extensively active, but not very different in essence. Modern scientific training on its practical and technological side gives a wide development to this sensational thought-mind, and is justified in priding itself on this achievement. Minute and accurate observation by a disciplined use of the senses, and a construction of experimental hypotheses on the results of such an observation are certainly an outstanding triumph of the empirical method of science; but, instead of being blinded by its glamour, if we try to assess it in the light of Yogic psychology, we shall find that it is the triumph of only the sensational thought-mind, which is tethered to the senses, and attached to life.

The ordinary human mind is not a mind of reason and will—it is a sense-mind. It is a crude organiser of sense experiences, and of its own reactions to the external contacts. At every step of its action, it is conditioned by the stored-up memories and associations in the *citta*, and the defective and misleading data of the senses. When it reasons, it does nothing else than sway from one proposition to another under the varying goad of life's desires and preferences. Very often it does not reason at all, it consents to the demands and decisions of the vital (*prāṇa*) without demur, and justifies them by a specious pretence of reasoning. It is a mind which has not yet come into its own, not yet been able to disengage itself from the teguments of its nether origin.

If man stopped at this sense-mind, content with its extensive and practical functioning, which is so very

conducive to material well-being, and not attempting to transcend it, he would remain a mere human-animal being, and falsify the high hopes cherished of him. The *élite* of his race have, however, risen beyond it to the intellect or the *buddhi*, and acquired the capacity of moving, more or less freely, in the ether of thoughts, untrammelled by the senses and their material pursuits. This is a development found at its high-water-mark in the thinkers, scientific or philosophical, in whom thought, cleansed of the dross of the earth and with its wings unfurled in a larger air, flies high in search of truth. This thought-mind, in proportion as it emancipates itself from the yoke of the senses, begins to seek knowledge for its own sake, and not necessarily or exclusively for an immediate life-effectuation. But it is in very rare cases, even among the scientists and philosophers, that it can range freely and securely in its native atmosphere and control and organise life from above, uninfluenced by vital desires and attachments.

BUDDHI OR THE INTELLIGENCE

Describing the *buddhi*, Sri Aurobindo says in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "Buddhi is a construction of conscious being which quite exceeds its beginnings in the basic *citta*; it is the intelligence with its power of knowledge and will....It is in its nature thought-power and will-power of the Spirit turned into the lower form of a mental activity." There are three steps of the action of

the *buddhi*: (1) understanding, (2) reason and (3) intelligence proper. The understanding is only a form of the thought-mind which can be distinguished from the sense-mind by a somewhat more developed thought-process. But it can hardly go beyond the data of the sense-mind, the memories and associations of the sub-conscious mentality, and the reactions of the heart. It tries in its crude way to understand, record and arrange what is transmitted to it—it is a trafficker in raw percepts and concepts. In most men the action of the sense-mind is topped by the mechanical working of this understanding, which constitutes their chief distinction from the animals, and their claim to humanity.

The reason is the next higher step of the action of the *buddhi*. It improves upon the first rough-and-ready arrangement of the percepts by the understanding, by means of a process of selection, by analysis and synthesis, and a more elaborate and precise ordering of the various mental-nervous reactions and responses. Most of our cherished views and opinions, our standards of criticism and judgement, our aesthetic and ethical principles are turned out on this second layer of the thought-mind, the mind of reason. It has a will of its own which struggles with a partial or problematical success to impose itself on the lower mentality. Though, more or less, like the understanding, reason too has to abide by the limitations of the sense experience, it has one advantage that, by analysis and synthesis and a new ordering of sense data, it can arrive at definite conceptions and judgements of

things, instead of remaining satisfied, as does the understanding, with the first impressions and their perfunctory reduction to inchoate thought forms. This mind of reason is responsible for most of the theoretical achievements of the scientific method in different fields of human knowledge. By a masterful manipulation of the reports of the senses, and an induction from them of the general laws which govern the operations of Nature, it has armed man with great material powers and extended the horizons of his mental life. The reason has two aspects: pragmatic and idealistic. The pragmatic reason is bent upon life; the will in it is predominantly a will to creation and formation in terms of life—it drives straight towards concrete results. Whatever knowledge it gains by its logical process, based upon the activity of the sense-mind, it hastens to utilise for an improvement of the conditions of life. It is sceptical about the validity, even the reality, of a knowledge that cannot be easily or immediately harnessed to the objective ends of life. This pragmatic reason has received an immense development in the West, and is at once its glory and danger. An exclusive reliance on it is a great hindrance to the development of the higher powers and potentialities of the human intelligence. The other aspect of the reason is idealistic, which, depending on its powers of comprehension, co-ordination and synthesis rather than on analysis and differentiation, seeks to command a total or whole view of life and Nature. Not satisfied with the surface appearances of things, and the dull bondage of the

human mind to the objects of the senses, it seeks to discover the rationale and purpose of life, and the cardinal ideas that determine and direct the processes of things. But the success it achieves in this new orientation is much qualified by its characteristic habit of discursive thinking.

The third step of the buddhi is the intelligence proper. It is an eminence of the human mind which, unless clouded by the lower impurities, can reflect something of the higher truth of existence. It is a seeker of Reality and a lover of Truth. It has the power to lift the human consciousness for a while out of the turmoil of the vital desires and the helpless suffering of the body. It has a wideness, a depth, and a limpid tranquillity which, at their best, can be an ideal condition for the attainment of knowledge. A developed intelligence turns naturally towards infinity and immortality, and is vibrant with intimations of our soul's freedom. But it is only a seeker of knowledge, and not its possessor. It can perceive aspects of Truth or a sum of several aspects, but never the whole Truth; for, the inveterate dividing tendency of the mind vitiates all its attempts at envisaging the indivisible Infinite. Besides, usually, it leans more towards knowledge than towards will, and fails to express fully in life what it holds inviolate in its vision. Its exclusive intellectual penchant for knowledge makes it often lose itself in the clouds and indulge in tenuous abstractions. It has also a facile tendency to imprison itself in its own ideas and speculations, and refuse to

break beyond them. Cured of these drawbacks, the buddhi or the intelligence can become our best means of self-transcendence. It is, in fact, meant to be, as the Upanishads say, the charioteer of the soul's journey to the Divine. It is the finest flower of man's *sāttwic* development, and a stepping-stone to *naistraigunya* or a secure superiority to the knotted action of the three *gunas*. It is an intermediary between the Light of the Infinite and the life of the material world.

THE THREE TRUTHS

Three things emerge from this study of the hierarchical order of the faculties of the mind. (I) Each successive step of the evolutionary psychology of the being is an ascent to a wider and clearer consciousness, and a progressive freedom from subjection to the lower determinism. The evolution of the sense-mind from the clutter of the subconscient *citta* is the evolution of a consciousness, which begins to be aware of itself and of its contacts with the world, and exercise its will, however rudimentarily and blindly, through its instincts and desires. The emergence of the *buddhi* or the intelligence, in its three successive stages, is a further evolution of consciousness and will, and a considerable release from its primal involution in the mechanical drive of Nature, and its subsequent subjection to the senses and their reactions and responses to the outer impacts, *vāhyasparśa*. On the highest elevations of the *buddhi*, the

consciousness of man can stand almost secure from the compulsion of Nature and realise its untrammelled separateness. It can take the position of a witness and even of a guide in regard to many of the movements of Nature.

(2) Each evolving gradation contains in it the potentiality of the next higher. The dim and drowsy *citta* contains in it and releases the sense-mind, which, as an instrument of the being, is more awake and alert and active. The sense-mind releases an elementary thought-mind, more sensational than reflective; and from that in its turn springs the *buddhi* with its ascending scale of awareness and will, its increasing sense not only of detachment and freedom, but also of a partial control and mastery.

(3) The ascent of consciousness towards freedom does not imply a rejection of the parts of Nature from which it has risen, but a greater and greater development and enlightenment of them, a progressive integration of them all into an organic unity, and their eventual sublimation into something beyond and yet sustaining them, something, for the manifestation of which all their chequered growth is but a long and purposeful preparation. The *citta* of the individual being does not remain the same after it has released the sense-mind from it—it tends to become more awake, more refined, more orderly and consistent in its action. It releases out of it the emotive mind and the aesthetic, characterised by a greater rhythm and refinement. The impulses it then throws are less and less blind and chaotic, and its shapeless hungers change into more defined desires. When the

sense-mind releases out of it the *buddhi*, it begins to be more and more regulated and enlightened by the new emergent principle, which itself, in its turn, continues to gain in rhythm and balance and limpidity of perception and will to co-ordination. One of the signal achievements of the *buddhi* is the mirroring of the soul or the Self of man. It points beyond itself. It is big with the supreme Principle of Knowledge and Will of which it is a lower derivation.

THE DOUBLE MOVEMENT

All this shows that a double movement goes on in each individual—one, helping the awakening and release of the central being and its consciousness, and the other, the development and purification of the nature. In terms of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, this double process can be described as the awakening and liberation of the *puruṣa*, and the purification and liberation of *prakṛti*. This double liberation is the inner sense and justification of the travail of terrestrial life, and it would be sheer spiritual narrowness to ignore it. But is liberation the last word? A synthetic view of this double process leads one to conclude that not liberation, but a fulfilled perfection is the goal of life. Infinite perfectibility is the watchword of evolution. Liberation is only its first decisive step towards perfection. The *puruṣa*, liberated (not alienated) from *prakṛti*, and *prakṛti*, liberated

from the shackles of her lower modes, unite in *Puruṣot-tama*, the Supreme Being, whose creative Force is Supernature. All purification in the Integral Yoga is, therefore, a preparation of nature for its final transformation into the Supernature. The graded emergence, development and integration of the various parts and faculties of human nature confirm this perfectionist view of life; but it must be understood that it is a divine perfection that is meant, and not merely an ethical one.

But the obscurity of human nature is great, and the entanglement of its parts, faculties and energies is well-nigh baffling. Evidently, no ethical or pietistic tinkering can be of any avail, so far as the aim of divine perfection is concerned. The simplistic method of cavalier repression is fraught with serious dangers, and ends more often than not in a dismal devastation of nature. The Integral Yoga, being a revolutionary intensification and acceleration of the Yoga of Nature, and fully aware of the confused complexity it has to deal with, proceeds in the natural way of life itself, laying hold of the motor springs of the organic being, one after another, and cleansing, purifying, galvanising, illumining and integrating them for the utmost perfection in a harmonious working. It represses nothing, maims nothing, cuts away nothing, but disentangles and quickens all, and puts them in their right dynamic relations with each other. Surely, no human mind, however wide and acute it may be, can be the guide and agent of this manifold purification. The Integral Yogā, therefore, provides for the

Grace and guidance of the Divine Mother for this super-human work.

We shall now consider the process of purification of the human mind, preparatory to the final work of transformation.

CHAPTER XIII

MIND AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART II

THE entanglement of the parts and functions of the *antahkarana* being bafflingly great, we have to fix upon something in it which will lend itself more easily and with a better grace than the others to the work of purification; but it must be something which is the most evolved in the nature and able to lead it to a higher poise and a more efficient working. For, the secret of dealing successfully with the instrumental nature is to use the most developed part of it as the grappling hook for the hauling and overhauling of the other parts, and steadily diffuse its influence everywhere. If one part is sufficiently purified, there is every possibility of the others following suit sooner or later. But no part can be perfectly purified till all are perfectly purified, for even the slightest imperfection of one impinges upon the others, and affects the general working. Therefore, we have to find out the part which is most developed in us individually, and set about its purification, extending at the same time its hold and influence upon the whole nature.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BUDDHI

In the majority of men it is the *buddhi* or the intelligence with its will, which is the most developed. Not that it is considerably developed in most men, but whatever its development, it can take the lead in the work of purification, inasmuch as it has the capacity to command a certain height and a certain detached superiority to the blind and knotted action of the lower members. Taking our stand in the *buddhi*, we can watch the movements of our nature and attempt to change or correct them. The initial, superficial perception of the sense-mind and the understanding can be developed into a crystal cognition, a detached observation and knowledge of at least something of what passes within. And the *buddhi* has not only the power of observing and knowing, but also of directing and controlling, which it can exercise upon the rebellious parts of nature. Its will is a potent means of purification. It can get beyond the data of the sense-mind and, by reflection and imagination, arrive at truths which are inaccessible to the sense-mind. It can correct and control the receptive sensational mind which lies at the mercy of the outer touches of things, and impose upon it a rhythm and a true law of perceptive and aesthetic enjoyment. It can teach the emotions of the heart a sense of symmetry and proportion, and cure them of their frothy effusions or violent heavings. It can put a brake on the random impulses of the reactive sensational mind and subject it to the rule of the ethical

mind, bent upon achieving what is right and just in thought and word and deed.

But whatever the competence of the *buddhi* and its potentiality as the leader of the lower nature, it labours under many defects, some intrinsic and some contingent, which have to be overcome, if it is to be used as a primary agent of purification. The first defect is its subservience to the action of the vital, the *prāṇa*. This action is essentially infected with desire, so long as it takes place in the conditions of the ignorance. All the preferences, predilections and prejudices of the *buddhi* can be traced to the action of desire. It is true that a man of sufficient intellectual development can deliver himself from the crude cravings and hungers that beset the average men, especially those who live mostly in the vital-physical consciousness; but he too finds it extremely difficult to rid himself of the subtler desires, the subtler preferences, the universally approved and admired affiliations of his being to certain cherished mental principles which, though basically unsound, appear to claim allegiance as gospel truths. Indeed, it can very well be said that there is no thought or opinion or judgment formed in the normal human mind but is cankered or warped by some desire or other. But the *buddhi*, which is liable to be thus tarnished, has the power in it to detach itself from the lower *antaḥkarana* and stand immune to the assaults of desire. It can, if it chooses, free itself even from the restless action of the senses and the turmoil of the heart's emotions, and refuse to be clouded or overborne by

them. This power of detachment is the secret of the mastery by the intelligence, and the lever of the nature's ascent and purification.

The detachment from desire must be carried to an absolute perfection. "The intelligence coloured by desire is an impure intelligence and it distorts Truth, the will coloured by desire is an impure will and it puts a stamp of distortion, pain and imperfection upon the soul's activity."¹ Man's real manhood begins when the domination of desire ends. Whatever the power and scope of the intelligence, and whatever its brilliance, it cannot turn towards Truth or live in its light, so long as it allows desire to sully its purity and fetter its freedom—it remains a slave of the lower nature, in spite of its potential superiority. There is no dearth of examples of a developed intellect committing gross errors of judgment or glaring acts of injustice or perfidy, not unconsciously, but consciously, even deliberately, driven by the desires and passions of the lower nature. In such cases, the intellect, because it submits to the importunities of desire, has perforce to play second fiddle to the unregenerate *prāṇa*, and forfeit its prerogative of being the leader of the nature. It is his animal nature that leads man, and not his humanity, so long as desire has the whip hand of his being. His immaculate divinity remains sealed in his unsuspected depths.

The second defect of the average *buddhi* is its habitual

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

dependence on the data of the senses. The intelligence that suffers limitation by the misleading impressions of the fugitive appearances of things cannot be an adventurer of new truths,—ideative, imaginative truths which tend to elevate and enrich life, and touch it into beauty and harmony. All the higher possibilities of life would remain unrealised, if the *buddhi* failed to transcend the reports and reactions of the sense-mind. The dreams of the poets and artists, the visions of the seers and prophets, all would be quenched and blown away by the chill breath of the sense-mind or the reasoning mind refusing to look beyond the physical facts of life. It is the tyranny of the reasoning mind, swearing by the exclusive reality of Matter, that is responsible for the poverty of the higher intelligence in modern man and the remarkable paucity of any outstanding intellectual creation, either in art or literature, music or philosophy. The remedy for this enslaving dependence lies in developing higher idealism, a yearning for the Infinite and Eternal, a tension towards the Absolute. A one-pointed aspiration for the Divine will release the mind from this thralldom of the senses, and launch it upon an exploration of the Infinite. And in proportion as it is delivered from its preoccupation with Matter and the gross pursuits of the material life, it will grow in lightness, limpidity and transparency, and develop its higher powers and faculties which will open to it new realms of vision and experience. An increasing power of stillness and silence, accompanying the power of detachment, will go a long way to purify the mind

and prepare it for the final transformation. But, let us insist, the most effective means to fortify the detachment and deepen the silence and widen it, is to intensify the upward look, the hunger and thirst for the Divine, and to dedicate all intellectual activities to Him. The *buddhi* has not to be left fallow, for it is an important instrument in the work of the reorganisation of life; but it must be freed from all lower subjection, fully developed in all its parts and powers, and held up to the higher Light for its direct descent into it. "*Mayyarpitamānobuddhi*" is the formula prescribed by the Gitā, after the Sāmkhya process of detachment has been practised, for the silencing of the mind and its turning to the Supreme. In the Integral Yoga, both detachment and surrender of the mind go hand in hand, and their conjoint action induces not only a turning to the Supreme, but also a potent purification and conversion of the mind's customary functions and energies.

Another serious defect in the *buddhi* is that, being the seat, *pratiṣṭhā*, of the ego, it labours under the fatal limitation of a separative consciousness, and in spite of all its attempts at self-enlargement, finds itself hopelessly spinning in the fixed orbit of a bounded perception and action. The ego is nowhere so powerful and dominant as in the *buddhi*, and nowhere so subtly, elusively and pervasively active. Whether it turns to the ways of light or of darkness, it has the power to constrain and lead the nature to its own separative ends. It is only when it opens to a higher light and surrenders itself,

poignantly conscious of its crippling limitation, that the human mind, particularly the human intelligence, moves towards the discovery of the truth of existence and the recovery of the unity of its vision. But the truth and unity it seeks lie beyond its present ambit, and can be attained only by a self-transcendence. A conscious movement of self-transcendence and self-widening, polarised to the Supreme Being of infinite Light and Bliss and Power, the One without a second, the Omnipresent Reality, will be the greatest means of deliverance of the *buddhi* from the meshes of the ego.

There is yet another limitation in the *buddhi*. When it comes to perceive something luminous and high-uplifted beyond its petty circlings and futile strainings, it feels a double urge to advance towards it and reflect it in the nature. This double urge in the *buddhi* signifies a double intention in purification. For, the *buddhi* is at once a means of ascent and a medium of transmission—an ascent of the consciousness to the unscaled heights of the being, and a transmission of the Light and Power and Bliss and freedom of the heights to the nature parts below. But when it finds to its chagrin that the nature parts are much too opaque and obscure to be able to reflect the higher glory, it abandons its work of transmission and reflection and strives to shoot straight into the Beyond. "This it may do by seizing on some aspect, some principle, some symbol or suggestion or reality and pushing that to its absolute, all-absorbing, all-excluding term of realisation or by seizing on and realising some idea

of indeterminate Being or Non-Being from which all thought and life fall away into cessation. The *buddhi* casts itself into a luminous sleep and the soul passes away into some ineffable height of spiritual being.”¹

In the Integral Yoga this unilateral tendency of the *buddhi* is neutralised by a wide aspiration for an integral union with the Divine and for His manifestation in life, and a dynamic surrender of the whole nature to the Mother’s transformative Force. The magnetism of the peaks is counter-balanced by the call of the base, and the Light that descends responds to the rays (the cows of the Vedas) that are released and ascend from below. The destiny of the *buddhi* is not to abolish itself in the Immutable, but to act as a bridge between the summits above and the plains below, and a channel of the splendours supernal. In order to fulfil this destiny, the *buddhi* must not only give up its basic egoism, but also its smug complacency in its own achievements, its petty thoughts and erring ideas and its bounded horizons of perception and imagination. There can be no hope for its progress if it does not become acutely conscious of its own besetting limitations, and the luminous infinitudes stretching far beyond.

A thorough purification of the *buddhi*—of its perfection we shall speak later—is an indispensable preliminary to the purification of the rest of the nature, so far as the majority of men are concerned; but it must not be thought that the purified *buddhi* is only a fully developed intellect, brilliant in its work of reasoning and discernment.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*—by Sri Aurobindo

It is more than intellect,—it is intelligence, in which there is less of intellection and more of light. In the sense in which it is used in the Upanishads, it is a calm, inner light, burning like a star in the dimness of the nature, and pointing to the supreme goal, *paramadhāma*. It is suffused with the sweetness of the heart, and athrob with the vibration of a potent will. Its guidance is a guarantee of purity and integrity, its steps are the steps of an unfaltering faith. To deliver this *buddhi* from the confused action of the lower nature is to be on the sure way to self-transcendence. A desireless, detached and high-aspiring *buddhi* is an ideal condition for the purification of the whole nature; but the ideal condition can be fulfilled only when the higher levels of consciousness begin to open and take up the action of the *buddhi*.

PURIFICATION OF THE SENSE-MIND

The sense-mind reacts to the contacts of the sense-objects by the dual response of mental pleasure and pain, which is a translation, in terms of the mind, of the primary duality of attraction and repulsion, whose action we have already noticed in the working of the basic *citta*. This reaction of the sense-mind is immediate and automatic, and often irrational or subrational. A man comes to me. As soon as I set eyes on him, there rises a sensation in me, immediate and automatic in its action, but nevertheless imperceptibly conditioned by many factors, such as the then state of my *citta*, the surface mood in which I am at the moment, the active associations of my mind, the

working of my sense of sight etc. All these factors combine to produce in me a sensation either of attraction or repulsion, that is to say, of mental sympathy or antipathy, which is a nervous-mental reaction, generated by the outer impact. Then the same reaction is reproduced in terms of the emotions of my heart, and I feel either pleased or displeased. All this tangled action of the *antaḥkaraṇa* goes on on the basis of the sense-impressions, and that is why very often we find that we have been betrayed into regrettable errors—the first impressions prove to be very deceptive. It is clear, then, that the very basis of our knowledge of the world is a shaky one, dependent upon many accidental factors, which preclude any right perception of truth. This erratic action of the sense-mind has to be replaced by a steady action of the *buddhi* in it. Instead of the sense-mind imposing its first impressions upon the *buddhi* and leading it into blind alleys, the *buddhi* must hold the reins of the mind and impose upon it a dispassionate calm and equality, and discountenance its habitual, irrational movement of automatic liking and disliking. The action of the sense-mind should be controlled and enlightened from above by the *buddhi*, and not left to be wire-pulled by the primitive *citta*, or obscured and bedevilled by the accretions in the surface consciousness. Delivered from the past *saṃskāras* and the habitual reactions, it will proceed in the developing light of the *buddhi* and help in the organic advance of the whole nature towards Truth. In the Upanishads the sense-mind has been likened to the reins, and the senses to the

horses which run through the pastures of sense-objects; and it is said that, if the soul which is the master of the chariot of the body, has to reach its destination, the Divine, it must have a purified *buddhi* as its charioteer, holding the reins of the sense-mind and controlling the wild senses. If the *buddhi* lets go its hold on the bridle, that is to say, the sense-mind, then the chariot goes tumbling and rolling into the nearest ditch. The *buddhi*, itself purified, must also reject the sense-mind's mechanical thoughts and ideas, its fruitless circling round its cherished objects, and establish in it a serene silence and a smiling readiness to serve the higher light.

As in the receptive, so in the active and reactive sense-mind, the insidious influence of the obscure *citta* has to be completely inhibited. The impulses to action must come, not from any desires, overt or disguised, but from the will in the intelligence, till the divine Will reveals itself and takes up the guidance of the being. A vigilant control of the *buddhi* over the active sense-mind will minimise, if not obviate, the resurgence of the turbid stuff of the *citta*, which usually seeks to swamp our surface being and spurts out in sporadic action. But for a complete immunity of the sense-mind from the raids of the nether elements, a more systematic purification of the *citta* itself is indispensable.

Let us now consider in brief the purification of the *citta* with a particular reference to the emotional mind, which is such a prolific source of trouble and disappointment to the beginners in Yoga.

CHAPTER XIV

MIND AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART III

PURIFICATION OF THE CHITTA

As we have already said, the *citta* is the basic stuff of our consciousness, teeming with all sorts of impressions of our immediate and remote past. These chaotic impressions go to nourish our desires and give them different, sometimes even contrary, directions, form most of our physical and vital habits and tendencies, and affect even our thoughts and judgements. Their action is so subtle and often so swift and sudden that, unless one has acquired a yogic detachment, one may not even be aware of it. Much of it is subconscious and unpredictably automatic. Let us take an illustration of it from one of the poems of Sri Aurobindo in quantitative metre¹—a little poem aquiver with a deep, rich poignancy.

THE DREAM BOAT

*Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?*

¹ *Collected Poems by Sri Aurobindo—Vol. II.*

*Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,
"Do you come now? is the heart's fire ready?"*

*Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,
It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.*

*Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits—
For the love died and the old joy ended—
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.*

The sense of the poem is crystal clear. "The gold god," the *hiraṇmaya puruṣa*, appears before a devotee who has presumably been praying to Him either to reveal Himself or to take him into His eternal embrace. There is silence within the devotee and without, and a sincerity of call that has obviously induced the revelation. But when the Golden *puruṣa* actually appears and asks in a "sweet secret murmur," "Do you come now? Is the heart's fire ready?", there is in the devotee a sudden upsurge of the turbid stuff of his unregenerate *citta*, its old desires and longings and attachments, and something shrinks and shudders, something that is "hidden in the recesses of the heart". He was not perhaps even aware of this subconscious scum, but it was there all the same; and when the moment for the final self-giving came,

there was an automatic shuddering and quailing,¹ an overpowering of the conscious parts by the dark sub-conscious energies. "And the boat passed and the gold god vanished."

This tragedy is not a poetic fancy, but a fact enacted in almost every life that aspires to a high self-fulfilment. It happens sometimes that the conscious part of a man's being finds itself ready for a great venture—the will is strung, the gaze of the mind is fixed on the goal, the heart longs and strains for it; and yet when the moment of the irrevocable plunge arrives, something tugs from behind, a wrench is felt, a chord seems to snap somewhere in a remote recess. Its sincerity is clouded by an uprush of involuntary insincerity, its unity of will is obscured and disrupted by many invading desires, and it finds itself floundering in a bog of dismal retrogression. Many a flourishing life is thus stranded or wrecked as a result of the sudden incursions of the subconscient *citta*. Besides these sudden inroads, the *citta* exercises a sort of settled insidious control over our thought and action of which we are hardly aware. It is only when a thought has crossed our mind or an action has been done, that we can detect the occult influence,—subtle, tangled and elusive, yet potently pervasive. Even the most masterful intellect often finds itself infected with the noxious

¹ cf. Yet was I sore adread

Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.

FRANCIS THOMSON

stuff of the *citta*, which distorts and perverts its reasoning and judgement. One often catches oneself feeling a sort of unaccountable antipathy towards a person for whom one is normally inclined to entertain only feelings of affection and regard. Sometimes we find to our chagrin that we have let slip some words or behaved in a way repugnant to our own reason, strangely actuated by some unknown agency in us. We often fail to come up to certain standards of conduct we have erected in our minds, or stick to certain consistent lines of thought and action, because of the obscuring and thwarting influence of the *citta*, or the dull drag it imposes upon our nature. It is rarely, indeed, that our thought and feeling and action escape this subtle influence and express our conscious personality and its reason and will.

THE CHIEF IMPURITY

The chief impurity of the *citta* is a chaotic craving and hunger for possession and enjoyment. This craving is the chrysalis of desire. Therefore, any serious attempt at the purification of the *citta* must aim at the eradication of this essential craving. We have already dealt with the process by which we can rid our being of desire, but an important and indispensable part of this initial process is a directing of the Mother's light to the subconscious and its blind energies. A constant detection and uncompromising rejection of all conscious desires must proceed on the basis of the true psychic consciousness,

which alone can enable us to detach ourselves from the lower nature and its desires; but a mere detachment from conscious desires is not enough, there must also be a probing and penetration of the depths, and a vigilant observation of the subtle action of the essential craving of the *citta*. In proportion as the psychic consciousness or the consciousness of the soul grows in the being, the observation of the working of the nature and an analysis of its hidden mechanism will become easier and more precise. But still there will be enough working going on below the surface and occult to our consciousness. It is, therefore, essential that the Mother's Light be called down and directed to these arcane regions. Her Light will illumine the subconscious obscurity and eliminate the impurities with which it abounds, either by a steady process of expulsion or by raising up and working them out, as it thinks best in the interest of a radical purification. All that the sâdhaka is asked to do at this stage is to have a perfect faith in the infallible guidance of the Mother's Light, and a state of unreserved surrender to it. Later, in the course of progress, a stage may come when he has to go down in consciousness into these obscure depths, with the Mother's Light leading him, for the final grapple with the subconscious and inconscient forces of darkness. For, nothing must be left, not the least vestige of the primitive cravings, that could prolong the action of the Ignorance. All the boundless energy of desires must go to feed the divine Will revealing itself more and more in the being as it undergoes

the psychic change. It is to be remarked here that in the Integral Yoga there is no question of killing or crippling the life-energies, whether they manifest themselves as cravings and passions or as ambitions and aspirations. As the ancient Rishis knew well, all blind energies of the lower nature are but perversions of their spiritual counterparts, and can, therefore, be converted into them. Anger, for instance, is a perversion of the *teja* of the *rudraśakti*, which destroys what has to be destroyed, but without any reactions of anger or vindictive violence. It hurls its destructive fire from a poise of all-seeing calm and impelled by the divine Love, which hurts in order to rouse and exalt, and destroys in order to new-create. Lust is a perversion of love, and sorrow and suffering of the essential delight of existence. All these energies will be purified, illumined and converted into their spiritual equivalents by the self-unfolding process of the Integral Yoga, proceeding under the guidance of the Mother's Light and fulfilling itself by the Mother's Force.

DESIRES ARE FORMATIVE ENERGIES

Very few people care to study the working of the energies called desires, which have a powerful formative force, and carry in themselves the potentiality both of happiness and suffering, light and darkness, progress and retrogression. When we desire something with a sustained intensity, we create in us an eddy of subtle

energies which sweep out in search of their object, causing many upheavals in our psychological and environmental conditions, and introducing into us elements which are not often congenial to the normal development of our life. And the desires being fickle, the forces and elements they introduce into us are usually of a chaotic and conflicting nature. One desire creates certain psychological reactions and forms certain whirls of energy-vibrations, which may and very often do come into conflict with those of another desire, and a third drives in a different direction, and a fourth in yet another, inviting forces which make havoc of all order and rhythmic progress. That is why we frequently find ourselves surrounded and harassed by conditions which are of such a confused and discordant character that they entail nothing but struggle and suffering. Life seems to stumble on through an interminable series of disturbing and disparate phases, zigzagging through steep and perilous paths, and tossing about from one set of circumstances to another. Aimless and rudderless, we drift on the currents and cross-currents of Time. Through birth after birth we chase the same wild geese, the phantom objects of desire, which elude us before we have secured them well within our grasp. Moments of joy and exhilaration are followed by long spells of pain and gloom. But the goad of desire never ceases, a treacherous hope lures us on. If only we could foresee the consequences before we conceived or indulged desires!



DESIRE AND WILL

The steady vision of the Buddha probed into the heart of this mortal disease of desire, and he was perfectly right in his insistence on the extermination of desire as the surest way to the attainment of freedom from the agony of rebirth. But he failed to probe beyond the desires into the Will of which they are but darkened and distorted fragments in the ignorance. If the distortions are removed, we get at a concentration of radiant energy which is the real motive power of our whole nature, *swabhāva*; seeking an unhampered play and fulfilment in our life. It is the self-expressive *élan* of the fire and force of our being—the central will, one yet multiple, and attuned to, or more precisely, an individual self-formation of, the universal divine Will. To destroy the distortions and preserve the will, the real motive power of our *swabhāva*, and unite it with the self-revealing divine Will, is then the whole method and aim of our dealing with *prāṇa* and its desires. And that goes a long way in purifying the *citta*.

Dealing with the subject of purification, Sri Aurobindo says in his *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "The essential turn of the soul to possession and enjoyment of the world consists in a will to delight, and the enjoyment of the satisfaction of craving is only a vital and physical degradation of the will to delight.... To tread down altogether the *prāṇa*, the vital being, is to kill the force of life by

which the large action of the embodied soul in the human being must be supported; to indulge the gross will to live is to remain satisfied with imperfection; to compromise between them is to stop half way and possess neither earth nor heaven. But if we get at the pure will undeformed by desire,—which we shall find to be a much more free, tranquil, steady and effective force than the leaping, smoke-stifled, soon fatigued and baffled flame of desire,—and at the calm inner will of delight not afflicted or limited by any trouble of craving, we can then transform the *prāṇa* from a tyrant, enemy, assailant of the mind into an obedient instrument.... To rid the *prāṇa* of desire and incidentally to reverse the ordinary poise of our nature and turn the vital being from a troublesomely dominant power into the obedient instrument of a free and unattached mind, is then the first step in purification. As this deformation of the psychic *prāṇa* is corrected, the purification of the rest of the intermediary parts of the *antaḥkaraṇa* is facilitated, and when that correction is completed, their purification too can be easily made absolute”.

PURIFICATION OF THE EMOTIONAL BEING

The essential cravings of the *citta* enter into the emotions of our heart and create there emotional responses and reactions of *rāgā-dweṣa*, liking and disliking. If we watch our heart from the serene poise of the enlightened

buddhi, or, better still from the luminous calm of the soul, we shall see that it is constantly subjected to the tyranny of alternating emotions, caused by the impacts of the outer world. The emotional mind is rightly likened to a sea, tossing with the waves of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, hope and fear, joy and grief. It is always restless, always agitated, except when it is fatigued or depressed. And the emotions heave not only the heart, they convulse and tear the whole being; they even cloud and pervert the intellect and deflect it from its course. This automatic action of *rāga-dweṣa* derives from our mental, vital and nervous habits in the formation of which the *citta* has a considerable hand. The whole structure of these formed habits has to be pulled down in order that our psychological being may be remoulded by the force and substance of the soul.

The sway of the emotional dualities derives its strength and tenacity from attachment. The renunciation of desires and a steady practice of detachment will weaken and finally annul the hold of attachment; but even when attachment has lost all its power, a habitual, mechanical action of *rāga-dweṣa* may continue for some time by the sheer force of habit. It can then be more easily got rid of by the will of the illumined *buddhi*. A complete elimination of *rāga-dweṣa* from the emotional mind may lead to one of the three following results: (1) "a neutral condition of blank indifference," (2) "a luminous state of peaceful impartiality" and (3) a universal psychic love and an untroubled sweetness and clarity, receiving and responding

to all contacts of the world with an equal delight. In the Integral Yoga there is no *nirodha* or suppression of the emotional movements, *citta vṛttis*. Like the other movements of the nature, they too have to be purified and transformed. Behind the tossings and heavings of the human heart, there is the tranquil heart of psychic emotions, radiant and rhythmic in its self-expression. All its emotions are waves of love and joy, deploying infinite variations and even embracing all human relations, but divinely secure against any deformation or degradation by desire. This psychic heart has to be released into expression, and its emotions of love and joy must take the place of the normal, agitating dualities of the human heart. A progressive infusion of the psychic emotions into the outer heart will revolutionise the latter and impart to it a glowing rapture and sweetness and musical cadence, which characterise the emotions of the gods. The emotions of the psychic heart are perfectly immune to all attacks of fear, grief, pain, hatred and depression, whether they rise from the unreclaimed *citta* or assail from the environmental nature; and when they occupy and begin their play in the human heart, they change it from a cauldron of conflicting emotions into a perennial fount of universal love and joy.

The essential function of the emotions is a rhythmic expression of the love and delight the being feels in its contacts with Reality, inner and outer. Their business is not to dictate or direct the thought of the mind or the actions of the vital-physical being. If they did, they would

give rise to a *dharma-saṅkara*, a confusion of the essential functions of the members of the being, which should act in a perfect autonomy in an integrated scheme of organic harmony. The general nature of man is, however, such a *dharma-saṅkara*—a hopeless tangle and confusion. His emotions vitiate his thought and reason, obscure his perception, and seek to deflect him from the right course of action. But the psychic emotions only contribute their characteristic warmth and throb to the thought and judgement of the *buddhi*, and a thrill and glow to the movements of the physical being. The choice of thought and action must lie with the *buddhi*, and later on in the *sâdhanâ*, with the supramental Truth-Consciousness, possessing and perfecting the whole nature, but never with the emotional being.

THE TWO BASIC MOVEMENTS IN PURIFICATION

The entire process of the purification of the mind boils down to two most important basic movements: (1) the emergence and increasing control of the psychic or the soul, and (2) the sincerity and completeness of the surrender of our integral being to the Consciousness-Force of the Mother. Psychic detachment, psychic love and devotion and psychic offering are the most effective means of delivering the nature-parts from the darkness of egoistic ignorance and initiating in them the reign of Light and Love and Bliss. And a full and conscious surrender to the Mother's Force and Light is the only way to illumine and

transform the *citta* and abolish its uncanny hold upon the different parts of our nature. For, the human mind, even at its best, is incapable of dealing with the subconscious and the inconscient, and it is these, as we have seen, that dominate the major portion of our nature. The practice of psycho-analysis or any other current psychological expedients for the raising up and purification of the subconscious energies is fraught with serious dangers from the Yogic standpoint, besides being puerile and superficial. Does the psychologist know how much of his own subconscious and his personal prepossessions and predilections enters into his deductions and hypotheses? How can he hope to be able to take an impersonal and disinterested view of the data of his observation, so long as he has not himself become disinterested and impersonal?¹ And how can he become an impersonal witness, so long as he has not discovered and realised something in himself that surpasses his shifting phenomenal personality? All ancient tradition bases true knowledge on the discovery and attainment of the soul, the imperishable entity in our perishable earthly tenement. This soul must be made the priest and leader of our spiritual journey. In the Integral Yoga the lead and control of the psychic being is of the utmost importance. "If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the

¹ Jung rightly insists on the self-education of the psychologist.

mind or any other part) it is impossible.”¹ The lead of the human intellect is a foolish and futile endeavour. And so far as the subconscious and the inconscient are concerned, even the lead of the psychic is not enough—it has to be fortified and directed by the supreme Light, the *ṛtam jyotiḥ*, of the Mother; otherwise it will be difficult to avoid a repetition of the deplorable tragedy of the Tânttric experiment which, losing hold of the light it had started with, —though it was not the highest light—sank into the swamp of the subconscious, and could never rise again. For, the darkness is great there below, its forces are blind and subtle and dangerous, and the temptations of power almost irresistible. It is the supramental Light of the Mother alone that can protect and pilot us in those obscure seas of our own being.

¹ *On Yoga-II* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER XV

THE PHYSICAL NATURE AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART I

By physical nature Sri Aurobindo means the physical mind, the physical part of life, called the physical-vital or nervous being, and the body. Before we enter upon the process of their purification, we had better be clear about what these terms signify. As I have already indicated elsewhere, there is no Hegelian obscurity about Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, nor an indefinite fluidity in the connotation of the terms he uses. There is, on the contrary, a remarkably scientific precision and definiteness, which disarms all fear of incomprehension in those who have the will, a subtle and flexible intelligence, and the necessary concentration to follow him in his expositions.

THE PHYSICAL MIND

The physical mind is that part of our mind which is linked to our physical and nervous organism through the brain and preoccupied with the gross objects of sense. It is the lowest and most materialised part of our mind, partaking more or less of the density, obscurity and inertia

of Matter, and incapable of breathing in any rarefied ether. It is the stronghold of all doubt and scepticism in us. It delights in material pursuits and feels proudly at home in them. It has an innate contempt for anything that is abstract, imaginative or visionary—anything, indeed, that is removed from its all too narrow orbit of perception. Lift it as much as you can, it will gravitate back to its normal level and spin round its cherished or accustomed objects of sense. It has a settled distrust of the supra-physical realities of existence, and seeks its heaven in the possession and enjoyment of the material objects and amenities of life.

The physical mind in itself is the typical Shudra mind. It knows no eagle-flights of thought and vision, like the mind of the Brâhmin, nor the high courage and noble strength of the Kshatriya, nor the adventures and achievements of the Vaishya, who seeks to turn life into a thing of joy and beauty and harmonious abundance. It is burdened with the lowest of the three qualitative modes of *prakṛti*, *tamas*. It is mechanical and self-repetitive, rigid and wary in its movements, always a prisoner of its bounded horizons and customary ruts. It is practical, in the sense that it has a more or less sure grasp of the material forces, and a steady eye on the main chance, and a certain deftness in the handling of material objects and opportunities. It is pragmatic and utilitarian, inasmuch as it is rivetted to the earth and the human body, and avid of material success. It has, and can further develop, an aesthetic sense, a perception of beauty and rhythmic

proportion, but it can hardly extend this sense beyond the material plane of existence—it cannot make it operative in the deeper regions of thought and feeling with which it has no intimate contact. It can only endeavour to build a life of limited material ease and well-being and a brief-lived symmetry, which is never quite secure against the assaults of the uncontrolled forces and the progressive elements of life.

One of the main traits of the physical mind is its conservatism. It is attached to the traditional, the conventional and the habitual—to all that keeps up the mechanical nature of its movements—and is reluctant to admit any change or departure from its safe moorings. Inertia is at the bottom of this congenital conservatism, this natural proneness to submit to the yoke of Matter. Left to itself, the physical mind will oppose all new ideas and reforms, regarding them as a menace to its very existence, and branding them as rash and dangerous. Its main concern is to preserve the *status quo*, the fixed and hedged pathways, the unalterable tenor. It is instinctively afraid of the new, the unexpected, and the hazardous. When a man shies at an innovation or a decisive departure in the realm of thought or in the field of action, it is usually his physical mind that is responsible for it. It advances all kinds of arguments in support of its inert adherence to the beaten track and the ragged routine. In religion, in education, and in general life and culture, it is always unprogressive, narrowly sectarian, and fanatically loyal to “the letter that killeth.” It is an ardent advocate of the

past, and would fain live in it, if that were possible, wilfully blind to the forward march of time. But time flows on, unheeding of its protests, and dragging it along through a series of constrained and painful self-adaptations; for, in this world of change and progress, nothing can afford to remain for long sterile and stagnant—it must either submit to the universal law, or vanish out of existence. The physical mind exposes itself to the hard knocks of evolutionary life by its obstinate refusal to change.

Another chief characteristic of the physical mind is doubt, to which we have already referred. It doubts everything except what is concrete, materially objective, and well within the range of its crude perceptions. The Johnsonian kick is its stock test of the reality of things. It doubts not only what is of uncertain validity, but even what it has known to be true; it questions even its cherished convictions. There are many typical instances of promising men held back again and again from higher spiritual experiences by the besetting doubts of their physical mind; or, having once had those experiences, forgetting, minimising or denying them altogether afterwards. If only they knew the secret of silencing or transcending the physical mind, faith would return as naturally as dawn returns after the night; but they cling to its obscurity which they mistake for light. And when the reasoning mind is allied to the physical mind, we have the dogmatic scepticism which proves a great bar to the progress of knowledge by its wilful shutting out of the unexplored levels of human consciousness and the

unawakened faculties of human nature. Its vaunted rationalism is a stubborn blindness to the higher light.

The physical mind is not the whole of the human mind, but in many men it is the most dominant. In the modern age of materialism, it is almost deified,¹ and Marxist communism dreams of bringing all mankind down to the level of the vital-physical being, and achieve there an equality which will do away with all differences and disparities of life and establish a reign of unity, both physical and mental. It is a dream which runs counter to the ideal of ancient culture, which was to raise the physical being of man, by progressive stages, towards the glories of the infinite spiritual consciousness, delivering him more and more from the ignorance and obscurity of his gross mind, and make him realise the unity and harmony of all in the eternal omnipresence of Spirit. The ancient endeavour was the exalting of the Shudra to the knowledge, freedom, peace and purity of the Brâhmin, whereas the modern labour—which is vain, because against the evolutionary spirit in man—is to pull all grades of men, Brâhmins, Kshatriyas, Vashyas, down to the level of the Shudra and unite them there by economic, social and political bonds. If the philosophy of communism carries the day, it will be the end of all higher hopes and ideals of mankind, and its relapse into the Shudra-type, the

¹ The typical modern mind is a combination of the vital mind and the physical, exploiting the intellect for its own ends.

merely physical, economic being, the human animal. It will be a reversion to the dead uniformity of a mechanised society, bound up with its material needs and their satisfaction, and harnessing the intellect to the service of Matter. But the soul and the higher mind of man will not consent to immolate themselves on the altar of the body, or barter away their boundless riches for a mess of pottage. Diversity in unity is the basic principle of creation—diversity not only on the physical plane, but on all the other planes of existence as well—and whenever there is a suppression of diversity, there is the implied threat of an explosion and a disruption of the social fabric, resulting in a return to healthier conditions of individual freedom and high-soaring aspiration. Man's pilgrimage is from untruth to Truth, from darkness to Light, and from mortality to immortality; or, in other words, from Matter to Spirit. But his ascent is both a sublimation and an integration, so that when man reaches the glories of his spiritual existence, he does not necessarily die to his mental and material life, but can bring those glories down into his earthly nature, and achieve a dynamic harmony of divine existence. Therefore, any philosophy or culture that clips his spiritual wings and chains him to the material life is, by the very logic of evolution, an obscurantism, a reactionary movement doomed to a disastrous defeat.

The physical mind, the sense-mind, the vital mind and the mind proper with its triple order of the understanding, reason and higher intelligence are the different planes of the human mental consciousness. Man, in his evolution,

starts perforce from the lower levels, but has to ascend to the higher. He should, therefore, arrange and regulate his life and nature and environment in such a way that they may help him in this evolutionary ascent to the higher planes of consciousness; for, beyond the intelligence there are still higher planes of the spiritual mind to which also he has to climb, and through which he has to pass on his way to the infinitudes of Spirit.

Our consciousness is in constant flux and movement. It rises or falls according to the quality of our thought and feeling and action. Each thought, each feeling, each action of ours has a corresponding effect upon our consciousness, and consequently upon our life and nature. This is a truth which the seekers of perfection should never lose sight of. But there is another complementary truth which has also to be borne in mind, that it is our consciousness that determines our thought, feeling and action. Everything in our life and nature is an instrumental working of our consciousness. If we take into consideration these two complementary truths or dynamic principles of our being, we are led to conclude that our consciousness is a developing evolutionary thing, struggling up through a maze of myriad forces, favourable and unfavourable, towards its own luminous vastness above. But even in the midst of its variations and fluctuations, it seems to preserve in itself a more or less fixed status, a relatively stable foothold, balancing its ups and downs. This transitional foothold gives its distinctive character to our consciousness. We may call a man a physical man,

if the foothold of his consciousness is in the physical being; or a vital man, if he lives predominantly in the tossing desires and ambitions and passions of his life-being or vital being. Similarly a man may be called mental or intellectual, if he lives not so much in his physical and vital as in his mental being. But a physical man may have vital desires and ambitions and also mental interests and pursuits; or a vital man may have the latter and may also be susceptible to spells of physical inertia and material preoccupation; or, again, a mental or intellectual man may have occasional lapses into the obscurity of the physical or the turmoil of the vital consciousness. Yet in spite of these oscillations and overlappings, each human being keeps a certain temporary station of his evolutionary consciousness, which determines his distinctive nature, and should also determine his place and function in society. The origin of the four-fold order in Hindu society was an intuitive perception of the truth of this transitional station of the evolving consciousness of man. A man who lived mainly in the physical consciousness was called a Shudra, for whom an obedient, faithful and conscientious service, in whatever walk of life it might be, was the best possible means of self-development. If a zealot humanitarian placed him on a higher status and trained him for a different vocation, he would be transplanting him from his *swadharma* to a *paradharma*, from the self-law of his nature to an alien law, and creating in him a psychological confusion, *varṇśaṅkara*. The ancient order was not rigid, nor had it

anything to do with birth, as it is commonly supposed, but was a subtle recognition of a man's poise of consciousness, and a furnishing of flexible means and opportunities for his growth and self-transcendence. There were other deeply psychological factors that necessitated and justified the ancient system, but it would be going beyond our scope to dwell upon them here. But times have changed, and the evolution of humanity has reached a stage at which the old ways and systems have to be replaced by others, more embracing and synthetic, which would do justice to the increasing demand for a harmonious development and perfection of man, and the realisation of the universal unity in his consciousness and life.

The physical mind, because of its obscurity and attachment to Matter, has always been the despair of the spiritual seekers. The intense yearning for a self-annihilating absorption in the unconditioned Absolute derives a part of its stimulus from the apparently irredeemable character of the physical mind, and the constant resistance it opposes to the expansive movement of the inner being. An increasing resort to meditation and a withdrawal from the activities of life are the usual means adopted for an escape from the dull bondage of the physical mind and its engrossing material cares. But as an escape is ruled out in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo—its aim being a perfect self-fulfilment and divine Manifestation in life—the physical mind has to be accepted fully and just as it is, and then purified, en-

lightened, and finally transformed into a flexible medium of the self-expressing Spirit.

What are the means of purifying and enlightening the physical mind? Sri Aurobindo lays particular stress on detachment. The inner consciousness, seeking identification with the soul, must detach itself from the physical mind and refuse to give sanction to its mechanical, self-repetitive movements, which are an obstacle to *sâdhanâ*. First of all, its preoccupation with the body and its needs and demands and comforts must be studiously renounced. This does not mean that the body has to be despised or neglected, but the mind's morbid obsession with it must be discarded, otherwise there would be no further evolution of consciousness. In the Integral Yoga, the body is regarded as an indispensable instrument of the self-manifesting Spirit, and as much important as any other part of our nature; but to be attached to it is to remain tied only to the gross material principle of our being, and forfeit our birthright to the light and bliss and freedom of our spiritual existence. Detachment from the physical mind gives us a release from the grossness of the material consciousness; it gives wings to our inner consciousness to soar into the Spirit-skies. Referring to the recurrence of material thoughts and the consequent obscuration of consciousness, which is a common enough experience in *sâdhanâ* the Mother says in her Prayer of January 4, 1914:

“The tide of material thoughts lies always in wait for

the least weakness, and if we relax our vigilance even for a moment, if we are negligent, to however small an extent, it rushes forward and invades us from all sides, submerging sometimes under its heavy flood the result of innumerable efforts. Then the being enters into a sort of torpor, its physical needs of food and sleep increase, its intelligence is obscured, its inner vision is veiled, and in spite of its feeling little real interest in these superficial activities, they occupy him almost exclusively. This condition is very troublesome and fatiguing, for nothing is more fatiguing than thoughts about material things, and the wearied mind suffers like a caged bird unable to spread its wings yet aspiring for the power to take its free flight.¹

Expressing herself on the same subject, the Mother says elsewhere (Prayer of August 17, 1913):

“Nothing can be more humiliating, nothing more depressing than these thoughts turned always towards the preservation of the body, this preoccupation with health, with our subsistence, with the framework of our life.”

A constant and loving concentration of our thought on the Divine is another potent means of freeing ourselves from the hold of the physical mind. Whenever

¹ “*Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother.

the mind turns towards the objects of sense, or towards the body and its urges, it has to be directed with love towards the Divine, the infinite and Eternal Master and Author of our being. The higher the aspiration, the less the chance of the consciousness sinking down into the morass of material cares. And along with concentration and aspiration, there must be an opening to the Mother's Force, so that it may come down and effect the purification and release of the physical being from its own grossness. "The higher consciousness and its force have to work long and come again and again before they can become constant and normal in the physical nature."¹

Another very common experience of the sâdhaka is that the physical mind harasses him with its swarms of mechanical thoughts during the time of meditation or concentration. These thoughts in themselves have no interest for him—they are trite and futile and tediously self-repetitive; they only buzz about and disturb his meditation. Sri Aurobindo advises a very quiet rejection of this mechanical buzzing of the physical mind. He deprecates all restlessness, all feverish effort to smother the buzzing, or shut it out, and teaches a serene withdrawal of sanction and attention from it. The quieter one is, the easier it becomes to get rid of this mechanical action of the physical mind; for, the will of the *puruṣa* is a calm will of irresistible force, which can never fail; but the secret of its power lies in its *masterful calmness*.

Another experience is that the intensities of the deeper

¹ *On Yoga*, II by Sri Aurobindo.

and higher parts of the being that sweep into the physical mind and fire it into spells of love and devotion and surrender, do not abide long in it—they are soon covered up or fade away. The sâdhaka feels drained and depleted.

When one falls into the physical consciousness, one finds it so dull and stupid, so cold and wearying. Depression, disappointment, and even despair usually follow this fall, and one feels, as it were, lost in a dreary desert. Or, there is the agonised sense of a stalemate or stagnation, as if the spiritual journey had come to a standstill, and no further progress was being made. Or, one is, overwhelmed with a sense of one's own impurities and incapacity, and tortures oneself with exaggerated repentance and lamentation. Or, there is a sudden irruption of doubts, which darken the intelligence and eclipse the memory of past experiences. One feels as if the very ground were cut away from under one's feet, and that one had nowhere to turn to for solace or encouragement. One comes sometimes even to think of giving up the yogic life and returning to the ordinary ways of worldly desires. All this is a state of bleak forlornness and corroding gloom.

What is the remedy? The remedy lies in not brooding over the fall and its disheartening results, but in recovering contact with the psychic being and infusing its fire and light into the physical mind. Once the rays of the soul penetrate and permeate the physical mind, it will tend to lose its habitual tendency to doubt and depression, and develop the capacity for sustained aspira-

tion, devotion and self-offering. There is another remedy which may prove more immediately effective: it is to step back from the unpurified physical mind, which is the home of doubt and despondency, and try to take one's stand in the inner consciousness. Those who have practised the technique of self-withdrawal—it is a primary, fundamental technique in the Integral Yoga—will find it very helpful in such cases. As soon as they step back, they can breathe freely in an atmosphere which is impervious to doubt.

The purification of the physical mind, as, indeed, of the whole physical nature, depends considerably on the conquest and enlightenment of the subconscious. If a passive peace were the sole objective, the physical mind could be left to spin and buzz till it fell into a wearied quiescence, but for a radical purification one has to tackle the base upon which it stands and from which it derives its obstinate habits and associations and its irrational impulses. We shall touch upon this subject at the end of this chapter.

The object of purifying the physical mind is not to reduce it to an inert automaton, but to release it from its doped slavery to Matter, enlighten its native grossness by bringing down into it more and more of the higher light, and finally open it to the direct influx of the Supramental Consciousness, so that, liberated and illumined, it can sense and contact the Divine everywhere, in all men and creatures and things, and express His Light and Bliss, and fulfil His Will and purpose in all its movements.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PHYSICAL NATURE AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART II

No purification of the physical being can be complete unless it deals effectively and radically with the sub-conscious and the inconscient; for, as I have already said, the roots of our physical being lie in them, and most of the habits, tendencies and impulses of our nature derive from them, and are fed and fortified by their force of inertia. If our physical being is irresponsive to any higher light or any supersensory truth, it is due to the grossness and denseness of its texture, which is mostly a product of the sub-conscious and the inconscient. If it is mechanical in its movements and has an instinctive horror of any drastic or decisive change, that too is due to the same cause. Many of the obstinate illnesses to which our flesh is all too prone, many of the psychoneuroses which disfigure or damage our manhood, most of the causes of decay and death can be traced to the blind and chaotic action of the sub-conscious and inconscient elements of our being. It is, therefore, imperative that in any yoga which seeks to effect a radical transformation, and not only a superficial purification, of the physical

being, the subconscious and the inconscient must be completely conquered and illumined, and brought under the direct sway of the central being. These nether domains of our being have to be made conscious and responsive to the higher Light.

The first thing to do is to exert a central will for the opening of the physical nature to the Mother's Light and Force. It will mean, in practice, the projection of a part of our most developed consciousness, and an infusion of its will and aspiration into the physical nature. The result may not be very encouraging at the beginning, for, the physical nature may repel the advances of the higher consciousness and refuse to be disturbed in its complacent darkness. But a quiet persistence is sure to prevail in making it open to the Mother's Light.

"The opening of the physical and the subconscious takes a long time as it is a thing of habits and constant repetition of the old movements, obscure and stiff and not plastic, yielding only little by little. The physical mind can be more easily opened and converted than the rest, but the vital-physical and the material-physical are obstinate. The old things are always recurring there without reason and by force of habit. Much of the vital-physical and most of the material are in the subconscious or depend on it. It needs a strong and sustained action to progress there."¹

The next thing to do is to call down the Mother's

¹ *On Yoga*—II. by Sri Aurobindo.

Light and Force into the physical nature including the body and its constituent cells, and steadily direct them to its subconscious and inconscient bases below.

“The light brings the consciousness of what is there; the force has to follow and work on them (the obscure parts) till they change or disappear.”

The mind of the sâdhaka may not be able to see how the Mother's Force works in the parts of the being which are veiled from it, but the central will, once kindled and concentrated upon a thing, can never fail of its objective. The will, exercised with a quiet persistence, calls down the Mother's Force, which begins to act on the inconscient and the subconscious for their purification and illumination. Mental knowledge does not count for much in spiritual life; more often than not it proves an impediment in that it bars the being's progress with its unenlightened constructions. It is the psychic consciousness that must take the lead, exercise its will, foster the growth of the right attitude and help the development of the inner perception in all parts of the nature. The sâdhaka should try to identify himself with his psychic being or soul, and “feel with the psychic nature and see with the psychic vision” the working of the Mother's Force in the submerged reaches of his being. In proportion as the purification of these reaches progresses, he will experience an increasing freedom from the compulsion of the lower appetites, the blind passions and the mechanical habits, which are so great an obstacle to the transformation of nature. When the psychic

perception develops, he will be not only aware of the action of the Mother's Force, but also able to hold up the remote and recondite tracts of his nature to its transforming light. Purification renders the nature transparent, and develops in it many new perceptive faculties which usually lie dormant in the unpurified human nature.

In course of the purification of the physical nature, a time comes when one finds oneself almost identified with one's external physical personality, which is full of obscure and unregenerate elements. This is a stage which has to be passed through with the utmost care and vigilance. There is almost invariably an upsurge of the muck of the subconscious sewers, and a desperate repetition of the mechanical movements of the lower nature. Calm detachment, awareness of the Mother's Force working in oneself, patient vigilance, a persistent will, and a perfect surrender and plasticity are the most helpful during this period. At a further stage, one may find oneself in the subconscious itself, which is a most crucial state and a poignant experience. But armed with the Mother's Light and Force, and completely surrendered, one is always safe even there; and when one emerges from this experience, it is never without the laurels of a rare victory, and the joy of an exceptional dynamic freedom.

"When the physical consciousness has to be changed, it is of course essential to work in the subconscious, as it has a great influence on the physical which is very dependent on it. The loss of consciousness comes naturally at first when the subconscious is being worked

upon. You have to be careful that it does not become habitual. If you react with a will for the change of this tendency (no struggle is needed) it will pass in time.”¹

All kinds of lust, greed and sex-trouble usually stem from the subconscious, and have to be faced with perfect equanimity and offered to the Mother’s Force for purification and transformation. It would be very helpful to remember in this connection Sri Aurobindo’s instructions in regard to the means of dealing effectively with these obscure movements of the subconscious.

As a general rule, Sri Aurobindo lays down that in all matters, small or great, we have to take the Yogic attitude, and not that of the moralist or the religious man. In the Integral Yoga, in regard to the lower movements like greed or sex impulses, etc., the attitude should be “not one of forceful suppression but of detachment and equality”. He makes a very illuminating remark that “forceful suppression (fasting comes under the head) stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains; in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression.” It is a very important and liberating truth of purification which, if practised with intelligence and steadfastness, will certainly obviate much of the wearing struggle and frustration the spiritual seekers have to pass through in their desperate efforts to purify themselves of the lower passions.

¹ *On Yoga—II.*

Regarding food, Sri Aurobindo says, "It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life that is contrary to the spirit of Yoga....One must be calm and equal, not getting upset or dissatisfied when the food is not tasty or not in abundance...eating the fixed amount that is necessary, not less or more. There should be neither eagerness nor repugnance."¹

"Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you..."²

To be preoccupied with food—its quality or quantity—is the wrong way to solve the problem of greed. Many yogis waste much of their time and care upon it on account of their ignorance of the right way of tackling it. They wrestle with greed, as with other desires and passions, and strive to strangle it by all sorts of ascetic excesses, which only entail repeated failures and disappointment.

"To be always thinking about food and troubling the mind is quite the wrong way of getting rid of the food-desire. Put the food element in the right place in the life, in a small corner, and don't concentrate on it but on other things."³

¹ *On Yoga*—II.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

On the question of the sex impulse and sex-relations, Sri Aurobindo is very emphatically definite. He does not countenance any the least laxity or camouflage in this matter. Sexual pleasure is a positive degradation and deformation of the divine Ananda, and those who seek to realise and express the latter in life must renounce all craving for the former. Sex enjoyment is absolutely incompatible with spiritual life. "...It is when one mixes up sex and spirituality that there is the greatest havoc. Even the attempt to sublimate it by turning it towards the Divine as in the Vaishnava *madhura bhāva* carries in it a serious danger, as the results of a wrong turn or use in this method so often show. At any rate in this Yoga (the Integral Yoga) which seeks not only the essential experience of the Divine but a transformation of the whole being and nature, I have found it an absolute necessity of the sâdhanâ to aim at *a complete mastery over the sex-force*; otherwise the vital consciousness remains a turbid mixture, the turbidity affecting the purity of the spiritualised mind and seriously hindering the upward turn of the forces of the body....One must, therefore, clear this obstacle (sex-desire) out of the way; otherwise there is either no safety or no free movement towards finality in the sâdhanâ."¹

It is a perilous error to think that, though the sexual act is forbidden and harmful in spiritual life, some kind of sexual or vital relation may be permitted. Dispelling

¹ *On Yoga*—II.

all doubts and disarming all subterfuges on the point, Sri Aurobindo says:

“In this Yoga...there can be no place for vital relations or interchanges with others; any such relation or interchange immediately ties down the soul to the lower consciousness and its lower nature, prevents the true and full union with the Divine and hampers both the ascent to the supramental Truth-consciousness and the descent of the supramental *Īśvarī Śakti*. Still worse would it be if this interchange took the form of a sexual relation or a sexual enjoyment, even if kept free from any outward act; therefore these things are absolutely forbidden in the *sâdhanâ*.”¹

Much of what is known and glorified as love is nothing but such a vital (*prāṇic*) relation tending to gravitate towards a sexual relation, and always a grave menace to the purity and sincerity of one's being. The initial aim in the Integral Yoga being an absolute surrender and dedication of the whole being to the Divine, any human relation of love between the sexes, however romantic it may appear to our lower nature, is a fatal counter-attraction, and cannot but end in spiritual disaster. It does not, however, mean that there will be no love amongst friends and relatives, but there must be no exclusive attachment, none of those sweet-bitter spells of vital-emotional intoxication in which one gets glued to a person and cannot make the Divine, the Infinite, the Eternal, the sole object

¹ *On Yoga*—II.

of one's love and adoration. For a seeker of the Infinite to remain tied down to a transitory finite object would indeed be nothing short of a spiritual tragedy.

There is again a very misleading notion prevalent among educated people and somewhat reinforced by modern medical science that sex is a "necessity like food and sleep and that its total inhibition may lead to unbalancing and to serious disorders." Sri Aurobindo exposes the extreme imbecility of the notion in the following words:

"It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But I have observed that these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind,—I do not think harm occurs when there is a true spiritual effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, if it is genuine, is beneficial; for the element in the *retas* which serves the sexual act is then changed into its other element which feeds the energies of the system, mental, vital and physical—and that justifies the Indian idea of *brahmacharya*, the transformation of *retas* into *ojas* and the raising of the energies upwards so that they change into a spiritual force."¹

¹ *On Yoga*—II.

The purification of the physical being at its subconscious and inconscient roots will eliminate most of the causes of illness, decay and decrepitude, and make for health and longevity and a general vigour and expressional efficiency in the outer personality. But a transformation of the physical being will go immeasurably much farther—it will bring about a radical conversion of the very basic principles of its working. A complete immunity from disease and decay, and even from death, will be the eventual result of the supramental transformation of the physical being.

The physical being is the façade of the self-manifesting Spirit, and, as such, its purification and transformation are of the utmost importance in the manifestational Yoga of Sri Aurobindo; for, without them the manifestation of the Divine in Matter can never be perfect.

CHAPTER XVII

KARMA YOGA AND ITS INDISPENSABILITY

PART I

THE BASIS OF KARMA YOGA

KARMA YOGA or the yoga of divine works starts from the foundation of a faith or inner perception that the Divine is not only the incommunicable, featureless Absolute with whom one can be united by the abolition of one's individuality and temporal existence, but the omnipresent Reality, the all-creating, all-constituting and all-exceeding eternal Person, at once transcendent, universal and individual, who has to be realised in all His statuses and aspects in a union simultaneously static and dynamic. To be united with Him only in His ineffable transcendence is not an integral union inasmuch as it excludes His universality and individuality. To be united with Him only in His universal play is also a partial realisation, inasmuch as it leaves out His timeless transcendence, and keeps one bound to the cosmic formula and spatial and temporal relations. To be identified with Him everywhere and at all times and beyond all Time, and in all stages and modes of one's being, is the supreme consummation and the highest fulfilment of human life.

The eternal Witness is also the eternal doer of all actions in the universe. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all names and forms. "*Karmani varta eva ca*," (I am indeed, occupied with action), says He, though He has no duties devolving upon Him and no obligations to meet. He is *viśvakarmā*, the doer of all actions, for, He says that all these worlds would go to pieces if He did not do action, but remained immobile in His inactive silence. His action is to keep the worlds together, to mobilise and marshal the universal energies for the accomplishment of His Will and purpose, and manifest His glory more and more perfectly in every being and creature. In one of its most magnificent chapters, the *Gitā* describes, in words of fire, the Supreme Godhead as the universal Spirit who demands of the human soul a conscious and obedient participation in His world-action. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna before giving him the revealing vision of His uni-universal form: "Thou shalt see my hundreds and thousands of divine forms, various in kind, various in shape and hue; thou shalt see the Adityas and the Rudras and the Maruts and the Aswins; thou shalt see many wonders that none has beheld; thou shalt see today the whole world related and unified in my body and whatever else thou wilt to behold."¹ Sri Krishna then makes His universal Form visible to Arjuna. "It is that of the infinite God-head whose faces are everywhere and in whom are all the wonders of existence, who multiplies unendingly all

¹ *Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo.

the many marvellous revelations of his being, a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking from innumerable mouths, armed for battle with numberless divine uplifted weapons, glorious with divine ornaments of beauty, robed in heavenly raiment of deity, lovely with garlands of divine flowers, fragrant with divine perfumes. Such is the light of this body of God as if a thousand suns had risen at once in heaven. The whole world multitudinously divided and yet unified is visible in the body of the God of Gods. Arjuna sees Him, God magnificent and beautiful and terrible, the Lord of souls who has manifested in the glory and greatness of his spirit this wild and monstrous and orderly and wonderful and sweet and terrible world, and overcome with marvel and joy and fear he bows down and adores with words of awe and with clasped hands the tremendous vision. 'I see,' he cries, 'all the gods in Thy body, O God, and different companies of beings, Brahmâ the creating lord seated in the Lotus, and the Rishis and the race of the divine Serpents. I see numberless arms and bellies and eyes and faces, I see Thy infinite forms on every side, but I see not Thy end nor Thy middle nor Thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form universal. I see Thee crowned and with Thy mace and Thy discus, hard to discern, because Thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an encompassing blaze, a sun-bright, fire-bright Immeasurable. Thou art the supreme Immutable whom we have to know, Thou art the high foundation and abode of the universe, Thou art the imperishable guardian

of the eternal laws, Thou art the sempiternal soul of existence.”¹

It is this supreme Person, *Puruṣottama*, who is the object of the love and devotion of the Karmayogi,—*Puruṣottama*, who is at once transcendent and immanent, one and many, the eternal Formless and the assumer of all cosmic forms. He is the Absolute, the Indefinable and the Unknowable, of whom the Upanishads speak as “*ātmapratyayasāram, śāntam, śivam, adwaitam*”², and at the same time “*viśwarūpam, bhavabhūtam*”³. The Karmayogi bases his life and all its movements upon this vision of the integrality of the Supreme, and refuses to twist away from the harsher, sterner and fiercer aspects of Him, in order to take refuge in the fathomless peace and silence of His ineffable transcendence, or the love and bliss and beauty of His spiritual Presence. He seeks union with Him in the multitudinous delight and labour of His universal movement as well as in the peace and tranquillity of His supracosmic silence. He aspires to be His playmate in this mysterious and marvellous world-game, and an obedient and efficient collaborator in the working out of His Will and purpose in it. He seeks an integral realisation, an integral union, an integral perfection and fulfilment, and has no exclusive predilection for either peace or power or knowledge or

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, by Sri Aurobindo.

² Immersed in essential Self-awareness, the Calm, the Good, the One without a second.

³ Universal in form, self-created in the becoming.

bliss. The all-embracing, all pervading Divine is his goal, and he advances towards it with an aspiration and effort characterised by an increasing inclusiveness and synthesis. For him all is He, Truth and its temporal perversion, falsehood; light and its diminished vibration, darkness; Bliss and its writhing distortion, suffering. An immeasurable hunger for the Supreme consumes all preferences of his mind and heart and imposes a discipline on each part of his being, so that, purified and illuminated, each may seek Him alone, and no objects of its egoistic affections, and express Him alone in itself and its movements. He feels and perceives that his whole being belongs to God, and that it is his whole being he has to offer Him, and not only his naked soul or his mind or heart; and that this offering, this joyous sacrifice, is the only means of his ascent to his essential infinity and immortality, and his real, constant, dynamic union with the One and his unity with all existence. And he resolves to offer not only his whole being, but his whole becoming,—not only all that he is, but also all that he is destined to be. He makes the Divine the very reason of his existence, the source and support of all his striving, and the eternal repose of his consciousness and being. This offering of the becoming marks the real Karmayogi, for he is a seeker not only of liberation, but of perfection and fulfilment—a manifold, full-orbed, rainbow-rich splendour of perfection and fulfilment here, in his earthly life. He does not regard the world as a snare or an illusion, or only a place of trial and training,

but as a rich field for the harvesting of the highest beatitudes of the divine union and the sublimest glories of the divine manifestation. It is true that life wears at first the aspect of a battlefield; but it does not daunt the Karmayogi; on the contrary, it affords him an occasion for adventure, for staking his all for God's victory in the world of division and darkness. He is born as God's warrior to fight God's battle and establish God's opulent kingdom here,¹ and not to fly away from the grim realities of life and its complex and baffling problems. Envisaging God as the doer of all works as well as the eternal non-doer, he aspires, by an active surrender of his whole being, to climb to the integral divinity of this double poise, and live in the world as a radiant channel of God's transforming Force.

This all-embracing and all-exceeding truth of the omnipresent Reality and Life and Nature having been once accepted as the foundation of Karmayoga, a question naturally arises from the confused mass of spiritual traditions of the past as to how one can become a luminous channel of the divine Light and Force so long as one lives in the world of dualities and in the Nature of the three *guṇas*. The *Gitā* replies to this question with its gospel of life in the Divine, "*nivasiṣyasi mayyeva*," and the ancient truth of the two Natures, higher and lower, *parā* and *aparā*. An accomplished Karmayogi lives, not the normal human life of desire and attachment,

¹ *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre*

but the divine life of unity and creative harmony in the immortal consciousness of the Infinite, though he apparently moves and works like others in the world; and he does not live in the lower nature of the fettering qualities, but in the inalienable freedom and purity of the *parā prakṛti*, of which the lower Nature is only a darkened derivative. The *Gitā* stops short only at a sparkling hint of the Divine Life and the transcendence of the *guṇas*, but Sri Aurobindo takes up this hint and elaborates it into a glowing evangel of the Divine Life, created by the transfiguring and revealing dynamism of the *parā prakṛti*, the supreme Divine Nature, the Mother. The soul of man in its evolution inevitably passes through the lower Nature of the three *guṇas*, but when it is liberated, it does not shuffle off all Nature and retire into its immutable unembodied essence, but, seated securely in the higher, converts and perfects his lower Nature of mind, life and body, and, manifesting God's glory through this transformed triple instrument, enjoys immortality here, even on this earth.¹ And it is only after liberation that he can really and effectively fulfil the self-law of his essential Nature, *swabhāva* and *swadharma*. If liberation meant a disappearance from the field of life, which is a field of self-expression and divine manifestation, then the self-nature of the soul would find no opportunity for self-unfoldment, but would be condemned to eternal sterility. *Swabhāva* and *swadharma* rendered nugatory,

¹ *avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtwā
 vidyayāmṛtamaśnute*

life discredited and discouraged, and the world spurned as a nightmare, the soul would be left with the single alternative of a precipitate retreat, if it were awakened enough to find itself choking in the darkness of its material tenement. That cannot evidently be the intention of God in the world and the denouement of the soul's long and difficult evolution in it. The Gitâ does not countenance this intolerant escapism, and the Veda and the Upanishads declare against it, and affirm in organ tones the reality of life, its teleological significance, and the spiritual necessity and efficacy of its works. In the Ishopanishad it is definitely stated that those who follow exclusively after the Knowledge of the One (*vidyā*) enter into a greater darkness than those who pursue the life of Ignorance (*avidyā*). For, an exclusive pursuit of the One means, in fact, a disregard or ignoring of the same One in the Many; and, therefore, the realisation of the Transcendent One to the exclusion of the universal Many or the One in the Many, is, indeed, a partial realisation, which the Upanishad characterises as a greater darkness, because once the soul has merged in the Transcendent One, it is lost for ever to the Truth of the divine immanence in the world and His Will to universal self-expression. The Karmayoga of the Gitâ is founded on the basis of the unity of all existence, and Sri Aurobindo gives it the largest possible extension, both in theory and practice, in order that it may eventually move untrammelled in the infinite rhythms of the supramental Force.

Holding up before humanity the sublime ideal of an

integrated realisation of all the three kinds of liberation, *sāyujya*, *sāmīpya* and *sārūpya* or *sādharmya*,¹ Sri Aurobindo attaches a very great importance to Karmayoga; for, without it the realisation of *sādharmya* or *sārūpya* would not be possible. To have the same nature as the Divine's, it is imperative that one should rise from this ignorant and stumbling nature of the three *guṇas* into the supramental nature; and it is Karmayoga alone that can be the ladder of this dynamic ascent. Cessation or diminution of Karmayoga will lead to an arrest of the divine dynamism, and, therefore, of the ascent into *sādharmya*.

Again, by liberation Sri Aurobindo means not only the freedom of the soul or the *puruṣa* from the meshes of Nature, but the emancipation of Nature herself from her own lower formulation of the three *guṇas* into the illimitable freedom of her creative Consciousness-Force. This release and transmutation of Nature demand an uninterrupted Karmayoga, a free exercise of all the parts and elements of the human nature in a growing spirit of dedicated service and in the emergent light of spiritual knowledge. Not escape from Nature, but a sovereign possession and joyous utilisation and enjoyment of a divinised Nature, is the great objective of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo; and it is indispensable for man's perfection and fulfilment on earth through an integral

¹ *Sāyujya* means liberation into an absorbed union with the Divine, *sāmīpya* into a blissful nearness of the Divine, and *sārūpya* or *sādharmya* into the infinite and luminous Supernature of the Divine.

union with the Divine. The Integral Yoga aims at union with the Divine not only in His Consciousness but also in His Nature.

There is another conception of Karmayoga which regards works only as a means of psychological purification, *cittaśuddhi*, and sees no further spiritual utility in it. When the purification is achieved, works are either rigorously clipped and curtailed, or made to flow only through philanthropic or altruistic channels. They feed and represent the *sāttvic* elements of the nature of the spiritual seeker, and only indirectly and rather dimly reflect his spiritual realisations. According to this conception, too much action distracts the spiritual aspirant, and had better be reduced to its bare minimum, indispensable for the maintenance of his body and his contact with the world. The motor springs of energy, physical and vital, are thus left to starve and atrophy in the heat and stress of an exclusive concentration on the peace and silence of the Immutable.

The philosophy underlying this conception is a life-chilling philosophy of negation which denies reality to the world and its evolutionary labour, and tolerates action only as a preliminary means of purification, to be abandoned as soon as its utility is over. It flies right in the face of the comprehensive outlook of the Veda, the Upanishads¹ and the Gitâ in splitting existence into two:

¹ *Sarvam khalvidam brahma* (All this world is verily the Brahman), *brahmaivedam viśwamidam variṣṭham* (All this universe is verily the Supreme Brahman).

Reality and Illusion. While the ancient wisdom declares that "the world is nothing but Brahman," that "the One Atman, who dwells in the hearts of all beings, has assumed all these multiple forms", and that "all these creatures have the one Existent as their source, the one Existent as their structure, and the one Existent as their foundation", this dialectical pseudo-monism tortures and juggles with the scriptural texts to uphold its theory of the unreality of the world, the unsubstantiality of life, and the eventual futility of all action. Against the magnificent vision, recorded in the Gitâ, of "a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking from innumerable mouths...robed in heavenly raiment of deity", it opens up a dismal panorama of mirages and nightmares and delusions and snares, and beckons to the soul of man to free itself and flee, as fast as it can, to a heaven of peace and silence beyond.¹ It breeds in the common run of men a sick world-weariness, a self-justifying indolence, or a morbid asceticism, and corrodes and saps their vitality. If ideas and thoughts have any moulding force, those of this school of philosophy have had the most blighting and enervating effect upon the national life of India, and are to a great measure responsible for the later decline of her culture and the paralysis of her creative endeavours.

The Integral Yoga has nothing to do with this ascetic conception of Karma. It knows that "works are only

¹ *Mâyāmayamidam nikhilam hitwa brahmapadam praviśāsu viditwā*

outward and distracting when we have not found oneness of will and consciousness with the Supreme. When once that is found, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. If knowledge is the very state of oneness and the love its bliss, divine works are the living power of its light and sweetness." Recognising, adoring and seeking union with the Transcendent and universal Master of all works, it regards Karmayoga as an indispensable part of itself, and the most effective medium of manifesting God's Power and greatness upon earth. It knows also that knowledge, exclusively pursued, may lead to an immersion in the motionless Self, away from the creative movement of the universal Spirit; that love and devotion, in their unilateral intensity, may lead to the absorbed ecstasy of the All-Beautiful in the secret chamber of the human heart, impervious to the vibrations of the outer world; but that Karmayoga cannot proceed except at least on an initial basis of incipient knowledge and developing love, and that it cannot progress except through the widening illumination of knowledge and the thrilled longing of love—the very spirit of it is one of harmonisation of the various strands of our being, and antithetical to all exclusiveness. "All works culminate in knowledge," says Sri Krishna; and, one might add, also in exalting and unifying love. The works of a yogi well out of an increasing knowledge and a flaming love—they are radiant and rapturous pulses of power. How can one offer all one's action to the Divine unless one has some perception

and knowledge of the reality of His existence, and a moved feeling of love and devotion for Him? Karmayoga thus reconciles knowledge and love in itself, and gives the amplest scope to every part of our being and every energy and faculty of our nature for the highest perfection and fulfilment in life.

It is this immense base of the unity of all existence and the unifying vision of the great universal labour upon which Karmayoga stands in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and bids fair to open up a new chapter of spiritual synthesis in the cultural history of humanity.

CHAPTER XVIII

KARMA YOGA AND ITS INDISPENSABILITY

PART II

THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF KARMAYOGA

KARMAYOGA consists in offering all the movements of our physical being, particularly the works done by our body, to the omnipresent Master of our being. Its primary rule, as the Gitâ insists, is the renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our action, and all preference even in the choice of action. Action has to be done in the beginning as a sacrifice to the Lord of the universal sacrifice, *yajñeśwara*, as an individual contribution to the sum total of the collective evolutionary effort. "The essential of the sacrifice of works is the surrender of all desire for the fruit of our works, of all attachment to the result for which yet we labour, for so long as we work with attachment to the result, the sacrifice is offered to our ego and not to the Divine. We may think otherwise, but we are deceiving ourselves; we are making our idea of the Divine, our sense of duty, our feeling for our fellow-creatures, our idea of what is good for the world or others, even our obedience to the Master a mask for our egoistic desire and a shield against the demand

made on us to root desire out of our being.”¹ But desires can never be completely eliminated except through action; for, it is only in an active life that they rise to the surface of our consciousness and press for their satisfaction. In an ascetic life of inaction and passivity, they lie either coerced into silence or chafing underground,—they are not worked out. An active life presents every opportunity for all the lower energies of the nature to emerge to the surface; and in the Integral Yoga the very first result of the pressure of the Mother’s Force is an upsurge of the dormant or suppressed desires and passions of the being. “Yoga in its process of purification will lay bare and throw up all hidden impulses and desires in you. And you must learn not to hide things nor leave them aside, you have to face them and conquer and remould them. The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free, they rush up and invade the being. So long as this mental control has not been replaced by the divine control, there is a period of transition when your sincerity and surrender will be put to test.”² This does not happen in the case of an ethical self-culturist or a humanitarian worker, for their minds exert some sort of curb or control over the movements of their lower nature, and there is no higher spiritual force doing in them the work of purification in its inscrutable but impeccable way. Even in the other yogas,

¹ Sri Aurobindo.

² *Conversations with the Mother.*

until there is a direct spiritual intervention, the mental inhibitions play the most important role, and achieve, even at their best, a partial and precarious purification, and a superficial ethical polish in the nature. In the Integral Yoga, on the contrary, the first touches of the Mother's Force rouse up the repressed or slumbering appetites of the unregenerate nature and compel them to be converted into their spiritual counterparts. It is to be noted here that when we speak of the elimination or expulsion of desire, we mean, not an extinction or annihilation of the energy that informs and impels it, but the egoistic forms it takes in the ignorance of the nature. It is the egoistic moulds that have to be dissolved, and the blind drive that has to be stopped; but the force and energy that feeds them must not be crushed, but offered to the Divine for a supramental life-effectuation. When converted and transformed, the desires shed their ego-moulds and separative drive, and unite and collaborate with the flaming Will of the Divine Mother, which then spontaneously fulfils itself in the individual nature.

What should be the attitude of the sâdhaka when, in the course of his yoga, he finds his desires assailing him with a desperate violence? He is not advised to restrict unduly the sphere of his active life, or hasten to curtail his activities in order to be able to devote more time to meditation and contemplation. In some exceptional cases it can be done for a time, and for a specific purpose; but the general rule is to give a full and unrestricted play

to the energies of the being in the sacrificial spirit of desireless action. Desires may continue to rise and clamour for satisfaction, but they have to be observed with 'tranquil courage, neither neglected nor indulged, and offered to the transforming light of the Mother. If one renounces action, one renounces the very field of unloosening the knots of the ego and desires and converting the blind energies of the lower nature into spiritual *tapas*.

The rule of the performance of all action without any desire for fruit, *niṣkāma karma*, is a very effective means of purification, particularly of the *prāṇa*. Every work must be done as an offering, as a sacrifice, in a spirit of consecration, as a service;—not only the important works of life, but every little thing that one does, even every little movement of the body. The *Gitā* inculcates this spirit of detailed surrender in action when it says:

“Offer to me (the Divine) all that thou dost, all that thou eatest, all that thou renouncest, all that thou givest and all that thou practisest to kindle thy soul's energy.”

When one surrenders and offers in this way all one's action to the Mother's Force, one shakes up all desires, latent or patent, and forces them, not by repression, but by an intense, detached and dynamic will, to submit to a spiritual conversion. This individual will, supported and fortified by the Mother's Will, is the most powerful means of liberation and transformation. What is indispensable at this stage is a quiet, untrembling

poise in the central consciousness, and a sincere and sustained rejection of all egoistic insistences. The quieter one is, the stronger one becomes; the more fearless one is, the greater becomes one's power of resistance. And when one is in this poise of equality and calm surrender, one can observe each desire as it enters into one or rises from below, and deal with it in the most effective yogic way.

But it is not enough to renounce all desire and hankering for the fruit of action, one must give up all attachment to action itself. There must be "the feeling (not merely the idea or the aspiration) that all the life and the work are the Mother's."¹ It can be said that the ideal yogic work is done only when there is no overmastering need felt by the Karmayogi for any work at all. To him any work appears as good as any other, so far as its inherent yogic value is concerned.² The essential thing is the spirit and the attitude with which he works. A work becomes yogic only either when there is an aspiration for union with the Divine inspiring and impelling it, or when it is an expression of the union itself—the former is Karmayoga for union, and the latter Karma-yoga in union. The common denominator between the two is the union; and any work that leads to it or stabilises and intensifies it is a yogic work. If the aspiration

¹ Sri Aurobindo.

² "All work done for the Divine is equally Divine; manual labour done for the Divine is more divine than mental culture done for one's development, fame or mental satisfaction."—Sri Aurobindo.

for union with the Infinite and Eternal is not there, then whatever the nature of the work and however beneficial its results to humanity, it is not yogic work. A Karma-yogi ought to be able to do any work to which he is appointed, and do it in a spirit of consecration and with as much skill as he commands and as much care as he can bestow upon it, but without any mental bias or stipulation, and feeling himself above the work—free in his soul and free in his nature. This kind of work is, indeed, *yuktasya karma* or *muktasya karma*,—the work of one who is not a slave of his work, but master.

It is difficult to have this freedom from attachment to one's work so long as the ego has not made its total surrender to the Divine. We may think we are free, but the moment our cherished work is taken away from us, we react in an unyogic way, and betray our bondage to the lower modes of Nature. The best condition for attaining this freedom is to rise superior to all action and live in a state in which action and inaction become one. An authentic yogic action proceeds from an inner silence and a perfect detachment from all the movements of Nature.

There are some persons who are very active and pragmatic by nature. It is almost impossible for them not to be doing something or other all the time. When they take up the Integral Yoga, they feel secretly proud of their energy and capacity for work, and naturally think that the quantity of their work is an index to their spiritual progress. This is a misconception of the very nature

and object of yoga. It is not by the compelling goad of nature that the true Karmayogi acts, as a puppet or a bonds slave; he acts for yoga, for union with the Divine, and for serving His Will in the world. His first concern, therefore, is with the right poise, the right attitude, and the right spirit of his being in regard to action. He acts, not because he cannot help acting, but because through devoted and desireless action he overcomes his ego, and advances by self-transcendence towards the Divine. He acts in order to get beyond the bondage of action, and render it a means of the self-expression of his soul, and the Divine dwelling in it. He works out of a growing inner freedom and peace and joy, and not by the blind impulsions of his normal human nature. "All should be done quietly from within—working, speaking, reading, writing, as part of the real consciousness—not with the dispersed and unquiet movement of the 'ordinary consciousness.'"¹ He can do, and often does, a great, even an immense amount of work, if it is felt by him as coming from the Divine, or conducive to his progress, but it is not the quantity that matters to him, but the spirit and aspiration and attitude behind the work. Karmayoga is a great liberating force, but it liberates only those who practise it in the developing freedom of their soul, and not under the perpetual lash of Nature's kinetic energies. As there are fanatics of Bhaktiyoga, who believe that to be always singing and

¹ On Yoga—II

dancing and weeping with uncontrolled emotions is the best form of *sādhana*, so there are fanatics of Karmayoga, who think that to be always in a flutter and bustle is the best way of progressing in spiritual life. What they have to remember is that Karmayoga is a yoga, and that no yoga is possible without a firm basis of quietude and calm self-mastery. Whatever work is done from the inner silence and serenity of the being, and offered as an oblation of love and devotion to the Divine, or whatever is directly inspired and intiated by the Divine Force, is authentic yogic work, and it cannot but lead to Union; all other work is but the effervescence of our egoistic energies, or a vainglorious parade of our personal capacities. If the quantity of the work we do, or even its quality, fills us with pride and a sense of self-importance, then the work, far from being Karmayoga, becomes a fresh bondage, and a cause of our fall from the path. To surmount the sense of being the doer of one's action is the first decisive step towards freedom in action.

Again, in the Integral Yoga, it is not enough to renounce all attachment to action and feel it as belonging to the Mother, but "you must learn to feel the Mother's forces behind you and to open to the inspiration and the guidance."¹ This is a point of capital importance. Karmayoga, as I have already said, is not practised in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo as only a means of liberation, but as also a very effective and indispensable means of

¹ Sri Aurobindo.

transformation and manifestation. Karmayoga continues even after liberation, as a channel of the divine Will fulfilling itself in the individual. Therefore, an openness and receptivity to the Mother's inspiration and guidance, and a constant aspiration for the working out of Her Will in the details of one's work are a very important part of this Karmayoga. In the beginning of the sâdhanâ, one acts according to the best lights one commands, and in a spirit of desireless self-dedication, but afterwards, as one progresses, one has to surrender the very choice and initiation of action to the Mother's Force, and become only a docile instrument of it. This transference of the initiative takes long to be complete; but on the way to it, one has to remain always concentrated on the divine Force and aspire for its guidance of one's nature. Let us take an example to illustrate what is meant by the inspiration and guidance of the Mother in the details of the yogic work. Let us suppose that a sâdhaka, who is an artist, is trying to offer his work to the Divine. It is not enough for him to be *niṣ-kāma*, desireless, and free from all craving for the result of his painting; it is not enough either to regard the work as belonging to the Mother, and do it in a spirit of sacrifice and dedication; what is more dynamically important is that he should remain completely open to the Mother's inspiration and plastic to Her touch, so that She may be the artist in him and he only a vehicle of Her transcendental Art. For, the ultimate object of this yoga is to let the Mother initiate and carry out all action in the individual nature, the individual remaining perfectly surrendered

and receptive. The human initiation and execution must be replaced by the divine initiation and execution. If the artist can thus remain open and receptive, he will find his art developing in a marvellous way under the direct inspiration and palpable guidance of the Mother in him. There are many instances of this kind of extraordinary development of the capacities and faculties of the sâdhakas as a result of openness to the Mother's Light and Force. Instances are not wanting of mystics, both Eastern and Western, performing heroic deeds, infusing superhuman light and energy into their disciples, producing marvellous poems or magnificent pictures under the inspiration of the divine Force. What has usually been more or less an intermittent or sporadic action of the divine inspiration is sought to be properly canalised and regularised in the followers of the Integral Yoga. And the inspiration and guidance received should ultimately be not of any of the lower spiritual planes,—there is a regular hierarchy of them—but of the very supramental Force, the highest *vijñāna śakti*.

Let us take another example. Let us suppose that a sâdhaka is working in an office. It is not enough for him to dedicate his work to the Divine, and do it as best he can in a spirit of disinterested sacrifice; he must seek the divine guidance at every step of his work, and be open enough to receive it when it comes. To open thus to the divine guidance is to qualify for being an inspired instrument of God. New ideas will come to him in the course of his office work, new and brilliantly fruitful suggestions,

which will heighten the quality of his work in an unforeseen way, and to an extent beyond his imagination. But if he follows the lead of his mind and does not look for the lead of the Divine, his work, by virtue of the sincere spirit of sacrifice in it, will, of course, conduce to his liberation, but it will hardly lend itself to any radical transformation. The human working may be greatly improved in quality and force, but it will nevertheless remain essentially human, and not be replaced by the direct divine working, which is the object of the Integral Yoga. Therefore, a constant concentration on the Divine and an unreserved surrender and opening to His Force and guidance at the time of work are essential elements of this Karmayoga. If this concentration¹ is not there, there will be no steady play of the Mother's Force in the human being. If a sâdhaka thinks that he can afford to dispense with this constant concentration and openness, and indulge in useless chit-chats or other diversions at the time of work, he is sadly mistaken—it will only distract his attention from the work and shut out the Mother's guidance. Whether one is working or waiting for some work, there should always be a quiet and intent concentration on the Divine Mother, and an openness and receptivity to Her inspiration and guidance. Such openness alone can change our physical being, foster the growth of the higher consciousness in it, heighten the powers and faculties of our nature, awaken those that are dormant, and transform the whole

¹ Compare the Gitâ's ideal of Brahma-karma Samâdhi.

instrumentation of our personality. I repeat again that the object of Karmayoga as an organic part of the Integral Yoga is not only liberation from the bonds of nature, but the transfiguration of nature itself; and for that, the direct and undisguised working of the Mother's Force is an indispensable prerequisite. There must be a free play of Her intuitions in the whole of our being, even in the body, and it must be Her Will, not only choosing and initiating our work, but informing and directing every part and turn of it.

In the beginning of the sâdhanâ, it may be found somewhat difficult to maintain this concentration on the Divine in the midst of the work. The attention and absorption that every yogic work demands may render it almost impossible. If we endeavour to remain concentrated on the Divine, we may find, to our embarrassment, that we cannot attend to the minute details of the work; or, if we concentrate on the work and its details, we are apt to forget the Divine. This is a common enough experience at the preliminary stages of the yoga. But as we progress in our attitude of surrender and consecration, we come to perceive that a part of our consciousness, an inner and enlightened part, remains detached from the dynamic parts, and concentrated on the Divine. Here love for the Divine plays a very effective part. A spontaneous love for the Divine makes the concentration not only easy but natural—none can cease thinking of the object of his love. Bhaktiyoga thus reveals itself as the throbbing heart of Karmayoga, and supplies the most quickening

force to the Godward *élan* of our active being. We can then remain concentrated at once on the Divine and on the work in hand; and by practice, this double concentration can be made perfectly normal and habitual. At a later stage, the two concentrations meet and merge into a constant, one-pointed concentration on the Divine, the omnipresent Lord and Beloved of all creatures, and it is the Mother's Force that is seen doing the works in us.¹ We must remember that not only the power of double or multiple concentration, but many such supernormal powers lie undeveloped within us. They develop quite naturally by the action of the *yogaśakti*, and what we now regard as impossible may appear to be possible, and even become normal with our spiritual progress. We can remain immutably concentrated on the Divine always, and in all that we do—working, reading, talking, eating, walking etc. As the yoga proceeds, this concentration deepens and widens into a union in beatific love and revealing light.

When we have progressed in desireless action and feel our action as belonging to the Divine, and perceive it as being done by His Force, we have entered into an equality and serenity of consciousness which nothing can shake or trouble. This serene equality, *samatwa*,² so much

¹ "You can begin to feel always that it is the Mother's Force that is doing the work and you are only a channel or an instrument." On *Yoga II*—by Sri Aurobindo.

² Referred to in the chapter on "The Triple Foundation" in the first part of *The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*.

extolled in the *Gitâ*, is the very foundation of divine work. I shall touch upon it when I deal with the perfection of Karmayoga in the next chapter. What distinguishes the equality of the *sâdhaka* of the Integral Yoga from that of most of the traditional yogas is this, that, in the latter, it is the equality of the detached soul, knowing and feeling itself separate from *prakṛti*, and poised in the consciousness of the Brahman; *prakṛti* works on, purifying and changing her modes and operations under the calm gaze of the *puruṣa*, and by the intervention of the divine Force, so far as the high-seated indifference of the *puruṣa*, *udāsīnavadāsīnaḥ*, is capable of inducing such an intervention. But in the Integral Yoga, which starts, not with Sâmkhyayoga or Buddhiyoga, but with a progressive and active surrender to the Mother's Force, there is, along with detachment and *brâhmisthiti*, an increasing collaboration and participation of the *puruṣa*, who regards himself as not only a *sākṣi* (witness) and *anumantā* (sanctioner) of the movements of his nature, but also as their *bhartā* (upholder) and *bhoktā* (enjoyer). The soul of the *sâdhaka* of the Integral Yoga calls in the Mother's supramental Force and collaborates with it in the work of the purification and transformation of its nature. This collaboration, this participation, this fusion of the two wills—the Will of the Divine and the dynamic (not passive and quiescent) will of the *sâdhaka*—is the distinguishing feature of the equality as practised in the Integral Yoga. It is a dynamic equality capable of realising a perfect and permanent union with the divine Will in human life. It

helps not only the liberation of the individual *puruṣa*, but also of *prakṛti*, which would not be possible except by the direct working of the Mother's *viññānaśakti* or supramental Force. Sri Aurobindo makes this point very clear in one of his letters:

"In the liberated state it is not the inner Purusha only that remains detached—the inner Purusha is always detached, only one is not conscious of it in the ordinary state. It is the Prakriti also that is not disturbed by the action of the gunas or attached to it—the mind, the vital, the physical (whatever Prakriti) begin to get the same quietude, unperturbed peace and detachment as the Purusha, but it is a quietude, not a cessation of all action. It is quietude in action itself. If it were not so, my statement in the Arya that there can be a desireless or liberated action on which I found the possibility of a free (*mukta*) action would be false. The whole being, Purusha-Prakriti, becomes detached even in the action of the gunas.

"The outer being is also detached—the whole being is without desire or attachment and still action is possible, action without desire is possible, action without attachment is possible, action without ego is possible."¹

With equality as the base, a constant and total self-offering as the motive force, and an active surrender to the Mother's instreaming Light and Power as the sole support, the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo advan-

¹ *On Yoga-II* by Sri Aurobindo.

ces on the difficult path of liberating and transforming his whole being, and rendering it a fit instrument for the manifestation of the Divine upon earth. His Karmayoga is instinct with love and devotion and more and more illumined with the light of knowledge. It is, indeed, a synthesis of work and love and knowledge that he practises, in which the three elements can never be separated. But in spite of the synthetic nature of his sâdhanâ and the direct increasing guidance of the Divine Mother, he has to pass through a long, intricate process of self-discipline and purification. Each part of his nature has to be tackled separately and in the mass, each of its movement to be scrutinised and sifted and exposed to the Mother's Light for transformation. Accepting life, he has accepted a tremendous burden and responsibility upon himself—his own and, in a sense, the world's; and it is only the sustained sincerity of his aspiration and the Grace of the Divine Mother that can carry him to the final perfection and fulfilment.

CHAPTER XIX

KARMAYOGA AND ITS INDISPENSABILITY

PART III

THE PERFECTION OF KARMAYOGA

WE have seen that man being essentially a composite organism and not a mere sum-total of heterogeneous parts and powers,—which is only a superficial aspect of him—neither Karmayoga, nor Bhaktiyoga, nor Jnânayoga can become perfect in itself without the others also becoming perfect and complete at the same time. A certain insular perfection can be attained, as we have already conceded, by Bhaktiyoga, without much direct help from Jnânayoga and Karmayoga, or by Jnânayoga without bringing in much of the elements of *karma* and *bhakti*; but the perfection, thus attained, would always betray its imperfection to the discerning eye of knowledge, and need for its fulness the incorporation and fusion of all the three. It is said that by knowledge alone one can realise the Absolute and merge in It; but if one analyses the inmost nature of the knowledge that carries one to the Absolute, one will see that the very force which wings its upward flight is the force of love for the Absolute, a sort of irresistible urge which stimulates and impels one's aspiring thought. And, besides, the knowledge that is gained by

this exclusive movement of thought, is only of the transcendence of the Absolute, but not of its dynamic immanence here in the universe. It is not the complete, integral knowledge which the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gitâ point to as the crowning fulfilment of our spiritual aspiration. Similarly, the contention that by *bhakti* alone one can unite with the Divine and commune with Him, is only a half-truth; the fiery intensity of Godward love veils the light that secretly illumines the path of love. Love leads to knowledge, and knowledge illumines and electrifies love. The more we love the Divine the more we come to know of His existence and nature; and the more we know of Him, the more passionately we love and adore Him. Therefore, any division of the three indivisible powers of our being—thought and feeling and will—can only cripple our capacity for realisation, and render the divine union incomplete and imperfect.¹ But Karmayoga has a special advantage in that it naturally unifies love and knowledge with itself and becomes an expression of the triune power of our being. It is the most potent means of an active integration of all the parts of the being, and the sole external vehicle of divine manifestation in the material world. Therefore, the perfection of Karmayoga would seem to

¹ It is interesting to note in this connection the words of Pfeleiderer who shared many of the views of Krause:

“Man’s whole vocation is likeness to God in this life, or the unfolding of his godlike essence in his own distinctive way as an independent active being, according to his three faculties, true knowing, blessed feeling, and holy willing and doing.”

imply a perfection of the triune power of our being. That is, indeed, the general conception of a synthesis of *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma*. But in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, it means something more. A mental perfection resulting from a mental synthesis of the three powers can be good enough for a *sāttwic* work in the world—almost selfless and impersonal; but it cannot be the authentic work of the Divine in man. A gulf still yawns between the spiritual experiences in the depths of the being, and its natural action on the surface: the former are irradiated with the native Light of the Spirit, and the latter only with the pale limpidities of the mind, intermittently shot with flashes of intuition. That is perhaps about the utmost we have had, barring a very few exceptions, in the spiritual lives of those who accepted the reality of the world and the teleological utility of consecrated action. But the Integral Yoga raises this synthesis from the mind to the Supermind, and endeavours to achieve, not a mental or even a spiritual-mental, but a supramental or divine perfection. If the mind, even the enlightened mind, remains the dominant and directing agent of life's activities, the perfection we aim at cannot be realised. The perfection of Karmayoga, as Sri Aurobindo understands it, must be a total perfection in the fulfilment of the divine Will in the life of the human individual. And the divine Will can fulfil itself only in a divinised individual.

The perfection of Karmayoga is attained when the *sādhaka* of the Integral Yoga has been liberated and

transformed in all the parts of his being including his body, and when his separative ego has disappeared for ever, leaving his consciousness in full and constant possession of the unity of universal existence. Perfect Karmayoga is a radiant blossom of a dynamic union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo gives an outline of it in his poem, *Jīvan-mukta*. It is to be remarked that the ideal of the *jīvan-mukta*, as envisaged by the Vedānta, is not the same as that portrayed here in Sri Aurobindo's poem. Sri Aurobindo has given it a more dynamic and comprehensive content. It represents his ideal of the perfect Karmayogi, who is also at once a perfect Jnānayogi and a Bhaktiyogi.

There is a silence greater than any known
 To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul
 That has become Eternity's foothold,
 Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
 That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;
 Revealed it wakens when God's stillness
 Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
 Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,
 A single might of luminous quiet
 Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,
An absolute high-seated immortal rapture
Possesses, sealing love to oneness.
In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the unconscious darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.¹

The base and fount of an authentic yogic action is, as
the poem states, "a silence greater than any known

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo Vol II.*

to earth's dumb spirit." It is out of an abysmal silence that the divine Will blazes forth to fulfil itself in the world. The soul of the liberated Karmayogi becomes a foothold of Eternity, that is to say, Eternity takes its stand upon this soul for an undisguised self-manifestation, and all that the Karmayogi does is done by Eternity itself in Its all-achieving omniscience.

The perfected Karmayogi commands a light of knowledge which is "refused to the earthward sight" of mortal men. His all-seeing eyes are flooded with that light, which reveals itself in his actions, but under conditions of absolute stillness—God's stillness above, and Nature's stillness below like a calm ocean receiving in its mirror the overhead heaven itself.

The supreme Power which, "calmer than mountains," bears the worlds and ages, descends into the *jīvanmukta* for conquering the evil and falsehood and suffering of the world. The *jīvanmukta* is not only a dove of peace, but also a "red icon of might". He unifies in himself both the gentle and the violent aspects of the Creator, and is as ruthless in destruction as generous and compassionate in protection and deliverance. He has transcended for ever the egoistic leapings and shrinkings of human emotions.

"An absolute high-seated immortal rapture" claims the *jīvanmukta* for its own. He lives immersed in the infinite, divine *ānanda*, and every movement of his nature is a thrill of bliss. And this everlasting ecstasy seals his love to oneness, making him feel the embrace of the

All-beautiful, the All-beloved in every being and thing in the world. He loves all, for he loves the One who has become all. In all that he contacts he contacts nothing but the Divine, the All-beloved. He can heal the suffering of the world and free himself from the same suffering, by a transcendence of all suffering, and a pouring down from above of his infinite and inviolable *ānanda* upon it.

The perfect Karmayogi has left below him the interminable flux of Time where we mortals float or flounder, and found his permanent abode in "the Eternal's breast", and, poised in that omniscient silence, he unfolds and reveals the mysteries of the Eternal. He has become a prism and channel of the Light, the Force, the Bliss and the Beauty of the Divine—a radiating centre of His unthinkable splendours.

Though living in a mortal, material body, he is a child of immortality, *amṛtasya putraḥ*. His unwall'd consciousness knows no limit, no death, and no bondage to anything in the world. Deathless and free, he is a playmate of God in His universal *līlā*. Life after life, unwearied and unworn, he plays his part, not for any personal profit or for the realisation of any merely mental ideal, but only "to bring God's forces to waiting Nature", to help "her tormented labour" with his "wide-winged peace", and to "heal with joy her ancient sorrow", by flooding the dark inconscient bases of life with the Super-conscious's Light. He works only to further God's manifestation in the material world, by dispelling the

darkness of inconscience and ignorance, and healing all division and discord resulting from them.

*Vast, God-possessing, embraced by the Wonderful,
 Lifted by the All-Beautiful into his infinite beauty,¹*

he works in the world "with his being beyond it". He does not care whether he is praised or blamed; whether he is on the righteous path or the unrighteous, as men judge it by their petty mental standards; whether he succeeds or fails in his work. He concerns himself only with the fulfilment of the Will of the "sempiternal All", who "is his guide and beloved and refuge".

The action of the Karmayogi is not decided by his mind and its ideas; nor does it follow the demands of the society or community to which he belongs. Nothing pertaining to Time and Space can determine his movements. His actions well straight out of his *swabhāva*, his essential self-nature, which is in perfect union with the Will of the Divine. His life is a spontaneous flowering of his self-nature, revealing a distinctive individual aspect of the Divine. His *swabhāva* and *swadharma* furnish the force, the form, and the right rhythm to his outgoing energies.

"The work (of the perfected Karmayogi) cannot be fixed by any mind-made rule or human standard; for his

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays* Vol. II—of Sri Aurobindo.

consciousness has moved away from human law and limits and passed into the divine liberty; away from government by the external and the transient into the self-rule of the inner and the eternal; away from the binding forms of the finite into the free self-determination of the Infinite. 'Howsoever he lives and acts,' says the Gitâ, 'he lives and acts in Me'....It is immaterial whether he spends his days in what men call holy works or in the many-sided activities of the world; whether he devotes himself to the direct leading of men to the Light, like Buddha, Christ or Shankara, or governs kingdoms like Janaka or stands before men like Sri Krishna as a politician or a leader of armies; what he eats or drinks; what are his habits or pursuits; whether he fails or succeeds; whether his work be one of construction or of destruction; whether he supports or restores an old order or labours to replace it by a new; whether his associates are those whom men delight to honour or those whom their sense of superior righteousness outcasts and reprobates; whether his life and deeds are approved by his contemporaries or he is condemned as a misleader of men or a fomentor of religious, moral or social heresies. He is not governed by the judgements of men or the laws laid down by the ignorant; he obeys an inner voice and is moved by an unseen power. His real life is within and this is its description that he lives, moves and acts in God, in the Divine, in the Infinite."¹

¹ *On Yoga*—I by Sri Aurobindo.

The perfection of Karmayoga implies a perfection in our union with the Divine. All the three kinds of union, *sāyujya*, *sālokya* and *sādharmya* have to be perfected in the individual. *Sāyujya* or an absorbed union or identity will obliterate all separation between the Divine and the individual soul; *sālokya* will keep up, even in the midst of this identity, a mysterious, ineffable difference without division, which will permit of a relation of love and devotion and a free transmission of the divine Will; and *sādharmya* will ensure a likeness or sameness between the nature of the Divine and that of the individual being, enabling an unhindered and unflawed expression of the Divine Will and a perfect manifestation of the Divine glories upon earth.

Then, perfection in Karmayoga demands as an indispensable pre-requisite our union with the Divine simultaneously in His three poises of transcendence, universality and individuality. The Will of the Transcendent will marshal the integrated forces of our being, the Universal will supply the necessary field and condition, and the Individual Divine in our heart will give the immediate drive and direction, the proper setting and frame, and the distinctive colour and rhythm to our activities. Without this simultaneity of the triple union, our work can be great and powerful, even universal in its scope and effectivity, but it will not be the authentic work of the Supreme in us, the very work for which we are created, the destined work of God's evolutionary manifestation.

A complete transformation of our whole being must precede any perfection in Karmayoga. If there is any part in us, or any single element or energy, which resists or refuses this supramental transformation and this utter submission to the transcendent Will, our work will remain tainted with imperfection. The whole organism of our nature must undergo a total transmutation, a supramental conversion, before it can become a perfect instrument of divine manifestation. And it is not enough that the conscious nature is transformed; even the sub-conscious and the inconscient ranges, too, must become conscious and luminous. There must be nothing left anywhere in the nature which can respond even in the slightest degree to the forces of ignorance and falsehood and suffering, which sway the life of humanity and impede its spiritual evolution. From the cells of the physical body to the summits of our mental being, all, without exception, must be divinely converted and rendered perfectly plastic to the supramental Force of the divine Mother.

“So long as one element of the being, one movement of the thought is still subjected to outside influences, not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true Union is realised; there is still the horrible mixture without order and light, for that element, that movement is a world, a world of disorder and darkness, as is the entire earth in the material world, as is the material world in the entire universe.”¹

¹ *On Yoga*—I by Sri Aurobindo.

When the whole being is thus weaned from all outside influences, transformed in all its fibres, and united with the Divine Consciousness and Will, the Karmayogi, freed from all personal duties and responsibilities, lives in the absolute equality and oneness of the divine Being, and works in the world out of His inexhaustible power and plenitude. This equality is the supreme equality of the Infinite and Eternal, which nothing in the universe can shake or ruffle. The Karmayogi has now become a divine child, liberated in his being and nature, immersed in an ineffable peace and bliss, and moved by the Divine Mother for the furtherance of her evolutionary ends in the world. Because he embraces the Divine in all beings and things, and clearly sees His Hand in every event, he knows that all in the universe are knit together by an invisible spiritual bond, and that there is a developing harmony everywhere in spite of the apparent chaos and confusion on the surface of existence. Catastrophes, cataclysms, revolutions, disasters leave him "not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature". Not that he is hard-hearted or callous, or indifferent with the impersonal indifference of the immutable Brahman. He overflows with love for all creatures, for he overflows with love for the Divine whom he meets in all creatures. He understands the sufferings of the world, for he sees beyond them their triumphant culmination in God's everlasting ecstasy,

and below and behind them their evolutionary source and utility and significance. An illimitable love, a high-seated, delivering compassion, a fathomless empathy, born of the essential identity, characterise his dealings with the world. And all that blissful movement of love and compassion proceed on the untrembling foundation of an absolute peace and equality.

The perfection of Karmayoga, as a correlate of the total perfection envisaged in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, is an extremely long and difficult work, but it is the only work for which the divine soul has descended into human birth, and without which no perfection it attains can really be perfect. It has come down to fulfil "a Will that stirs in a divine peace, a Knowledge that moves from the transcendent Light, a glad Impulse that is a force from the supreme Ananda."¹

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER XX

LOVE—ITS PLACE AND POWER

PART I

THE general conception about Bhaktiyoga or the yoga of love and devotion is that it is an exclusive turning of the emotions of the human heart towards God, or a particular aspect or form of His. It is a culture of spiritual emotions. Love is its motive force—love of the Divine, not as an impersonal existence or an incommunicable Absolute, but as the supreme Being, who is the author and friend and guide of all creatures. This love may take one of the five principal forms: *śānta*, *dāśya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura*. The *bhakta* or devotee of the *śānta* type may have a deep and intense love for the Divine, but the intensity is always firmly based on a wide and clear calm. *Dāśya* is the love of the servant for the Master, of which *Hanuman* is the legendary type. *Sakhya* is the love between two friends, the Divine and the human soul, of which Arjuna, Uddhava, Sudāmā etc. are the recognised models. *Vātsalya* is the love of the mother for her child. In this form of *bhakti* God is loved as one's own child, who is dearer than life itself. Yashoda, the mother of Sri Krishna, is regarded as the supreme example of this kind of love. But the crowning perfection of love is

the *madhurabhāva*, the “self-naughting” love of the lover for his Beloved. The human soul as the lover, the bride, longs for a complete union with the divine Beloved, the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful. This is the highest, deepest and sweetest of all forms. It is, to quote ancient authority, *anirvacanīyam premasvarūpam*, ineffable and indefinable—ineffable like the gratification of the sense of taste felt by the dumb, *mūkāsvādanavat*. Râdhâ is considered the very embodiment of this *madhurabhāva*. A glad and unreserved self-giving is the natural movement of this love, leading to a complete union and identification of the human soul with the Divine. Though the aspect of beauty and bliss of the Divine is the one upon which all kinds of love and devotion concentrate, yet it receives the utmost prominence in *madhurabhāva*, submerging and surpassing all other aspects, and rendering the life of the *bhakta* a ceaseless pulse and poem of delight. Even the pain of separation, excruciating as it is, yields a distilled essence of delight. The ideal *bhakta* desires nothing for himself, neither knowledge, nor power, nor fame and distinction; the sole, consuming passion of his being is the pleasure of his Beloved, the joy of His presence, and the ecstasy of His embrace.

But the orthodox *bhakta* fights shy of a complete union with God. He does not want to abolish all his individuality in the absorbed rapture of the union, for that would not really be union but a dissolution of his being, and an eternal end to all his enjoyment of the beauty and bliss of his Beloved. Even in the highest intensity of his

Godward passion, he keeps up a certain difference,¹ very minute and subtle, which almost reaches its vanishing point in the *mahābhāva*; but he never courts *sāyujya*, the self-annihilating merger in the undifferentiated One. This inexpressible difference in non-difference (*acintya-bhedābheda*) is the summit experience of Bhaktiyoga, in which the *bhakta* lives, when he has emancipated himself from all lower bondage and turned all his consciousness to the Lord of Love and Bliss—*saccidānandarase bhaktiyoge tiṣṭhati*.

It is not that this love and devotion is one-sided and remains unrequited. All love implies the certitude of a return in kind. As the soul of man, when it is awakened to the truth of its existence, turns passionately, impetuously to the Divine, and gives all itself and all it has to Him, so does the Divine yearn after a union with the human soul and give all Himself to it. As Râdhâ loves and longs for Sri Krishna, so does Sri Krishna love and long for Râdhâ.² The love of the heart of Râdhâ mounts

¹ "His being remains but in another form, in another glory, and in another power"—Suso, the mystic.

"When the soul is plunged in the fire of divine love, like iron, it first loses its blackness, and then growing to white heat, it becomes like unto the fire itself. And lastly, it grows liquid, and losing its nature is transmuted into an utterly different quality of being."
 —Richard of St. Victor.

² "O soul, before the world was I longed for thee: and I shall still long for thee, and thou for Me. Therefore, when our two desires unite, Love shall be fulfilled."—The Divine to Mechthild of Magdeburg.

up like a steady flame towards the Lord of her life, and the Love of the Lord leans down to meet it in an engulfing blaze of beauty and bliss,¹ and the embrace of the two is the highest rapture imaginable in creation, and the seal of the soul's liberation and fulfilment.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo accepts and incorporates into itself all that is essential in the orthodox principles and practice of Bhaktiyoga, but, because it has to widen the very bases of Yoga, and bring into life all its higher gains in order to fertilise it and fulfil its deepest aspirations, its approach to love is much more comprehensive, as we shall presently see, and it traces love to its divine origin and essence above in the creative joy of identity, and to its evolution and ascent from below. In its view, Love is the greatest power of the Divine, and the supreme Force behind the stupendous movement of evolutionary Nature. It is the soul of all our upward aspiration and our deliverer from all egoistic littlenesses and limitations. It is, therefore, indispensable that this supreme Force of divine Love be discovered, realised, brought down, and harnessed to the transformation and perfection of human life. Without a regular, canalised flow of the divine Love, the "fire-passion of Grace", life cannot become a perennial torrent of Light, and man a manifesting medium of the unveiled Eternal.

¹ Cf. Mirabai's first experience of the overwhelming invasion of Love.

"Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity: it finds its supreme expression in the bliss of union. Between the two there are all the phases of its universal manifestation.

"At the beginning of this manifestation, Love is, in the purity of its origin, composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the impulsion towards complete fusion. On one side, it is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need of absolute self-giving. No other movement can do better in throwing a bridge over the abyss that was dug in the individual being when its consciousness separated from its origin and became inconscience.

"What was projected into space had to be brought back to itself without however destroying the universe so created. Therefore Love burst forth, the sole irresistible power of union."¹

The first movement, the crucial signal, that initiates evolution out of the involved state of inconscience, is the descent of Love into the abyss of Matter. It is a holocaust of Love,² its magnificent self-sacrifice,³ this descent into the death and darkness of the material world, so that Life and Light may emerge here, and a love seeking union with that from which it has been estranged. Love attracting from above and love awaking and responding from below and advancing towards union by a progressive

¹ The Mother in *The Bulletin of physical Education*—August 1953.

² According to Plotinus the Divine is never more itself than when it "empties itself" in self-sacrificing love.

³ Described in the Purusha-Sukta of The Rigveda.

self-giving—this is the hidden mystery, the quintessential truth of creation and evolution. All beings, all creatures, even all things which appear as inanimate, are impelled by this emergent love, consciously or sub-consciously, towards this union and identity. In all our desires and lusts and longings we really seek, not the fleeting, finite forms we blindly pursue, but the infinite Beloved of our being, who has assumed all these forms. But the seeking is fickle and obscure so long as we have not evolved into a consciousness of the living unity of all existence. That is why no enjoyment of the objects of our desire gives us an abiding satisfaction—an insatiable hunger drives us on, an unquenchable discontent compels introspection, and tends to throw down the barriers of our egoistic consciousness. By continuous self-giving we grow and expand; by dying to our mortal self, we are able to live in our immortal Spirit.

Contemplated in this perspective, life appears as a play of love between the sucking souls and the Mother-Soul, brooding in infinite tenderness over them; or a game, a *līlā*, between the evolving Nature and the eternal Lord of Nature, Rādhā and Krishna. The movement of love is, therefore, the most natural movement of the human soul in its upsurging towards the Infinite. That which has released the soul from the inconscience of Matter and guided it from behind the veil in its obscure wandering from life to life, can alone lead it to the highest fulfilment of its terrestrial birth. What emerged as desire shall end in delight.

The very beginning of the Integral Yoga is a movement of love; for, what is called aspiration is also love looking up in an expanding vision towards some high and distant fulfilment. It is true that in its incipient state it is somewhat vague and indefinite, compounded of the mind's ignorant thoughts and the heart's selfish emotions; but as it grows, it develops into selfless love with a steady will flaming in its centre. It turns to the supreme Mother, the divine *mahāśakti*, who sums up for the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga all the aspects of the Divine to which the aspiring human consciousness may feel a natural attraction. "From the beginning even it is possible to have this closer relation of the lover and the beloved, but it will not be as exclusive for the integral yogin as for certain purely ecstatic ways of Bhakti. It will from the beginning take into itself something of the hues of the other relations, since he follows too knowledge and works and has need of the Divine as teacher, friend and master. The growing of the love of God must carry with it in him an expansion of the knowledge of God and of the action of the divine Will in his nature and being."¹ All these and other complex needs of the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga are fully met by the Divine Mother. In Her we embrace our eternal Father, our Friend and Lover, our Teacher and Master, and our sole Deliverer and Refuge. And beyond all these relations, deep and sweet as they are, we find something in Her which is unutterably comforting and

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* or *On Yoga-I* by Sri Aurobindo.

reassuring, something infallibly sustaining, succouring and healing, something which only a child feels when it looks up into the eyes of its mother. There is no other relation that can be so profound and so serenely, so confidently secure and self-sufficient; no other tenderness that can brood with such infinite solicitude, such benign, inexhaustible patience over the slow, stumbling progress of our evolving souls. Benighted and blundering, we approach Her for knowledge and guidance, and, as *Maheśwarī*, She dispels the gloom and leads us, step by step, towards the Light supernal. Feeble and forlorn, limp and timid, we approach Her for strength and courage, and, as *Mahākālī*, She fills us with Her Force and energy and the fiery intensity of Her Will, and chases away from us all fear and sense of frustration. Her lightning glances steel our nerves, and strike terror into the forces of darkness that assail us. Jarred by the discords of life, repelled and afflicted by its poverty, squalor and ugliness, when we approach Her, as *Mahālakṣmī*, She pours into our hearts and our lives the wealth and harmony, the sweetness and beauty of Her divine existence. Her radiant smile enfolds us in its heavenly charm, and her tenderness heals us of all grief and sorrow. And, as *Mahāsaraswatī*, She teaches us the arts and crafts of life, the techniques of action and execution, and turns our human incompetence and inaptitude into divine skill and efficiency. She cures us of all sloth and negligence and awkwardness, and imparts to us the deftness and delicacy of touch that characterise the products of inspiration and make for perfection.

The four aspects of the Divine Mother comprise all that our integral being may yearn for and love. *Maheśvarī* illumines our intelligence and gives it all the wisdom and knowledge it may seek. *Mahākālī* bestows upon us all the force and courage, all the ardour and intensity of will, all the lofty feelings of dignity, nobility and magnanimity and self-sacrifice that our enlightened temperament and the dynamic parts of our nature may aspire for. *Mahālakṣmī* floods our heart and our higher vital being with love and sweetness, with harmony and happiness, and a serene peace and repose even in the midst of a thousand calls of our creative energies. *Mahāsarasvatī* fulfils all the high aspirations of our physical and active being. No single aspect of the Divine, even that of the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful, can be so embracing and integrally satisfying and uplifting as that of the Divine Mother; for, She is the Consciousness-Force of the Divine Himself. The All-Blissful aspect alone does not meet our being's demand for strength and power and a flaming will of effectuation, indispensable for the transformation and perfection of life we aim at in the Integral Yoga. The silent, immutable Impersonal of the orthodox Vedāntin gives us no foothold on our upward march, nor reciprocates our feelings of love and devotion. The dreadful *Rudra* does not satisfy our heart's hankering for sweetness and tenderness, and our physical being's thirst for perfection in its life-expression. All these aspects have to be harmonised in a global sovereignty of the Godhead to which our whole being can be polarised,

and in which it can seek and find a manifold fulfilment.

In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, it is, indeed, the integral Divine who is the object of the sâdhaka's love and devotion. His transcendence is sought to be embraced in "the ecstasy of an absolute union", his universality in "infinite quality and every aspect and in all beings with a universal delight and love", and his individuality in "all human relations with Him that love creates between person and person". But when the sâdhaka turns to this integral Divine, this *Puruṣottama* or *Parameśwara*, he meets in Him at first the *Parameśwarī*, the *Ādyaśakti*, as constituting His Consciousness-Force, and representing at once His still, unthinkable transcendence and His infinite, creative dynamism. The Divine appears to him as the Divine Mother, the supreme *Puruṣa* as the supreme Nature or *parā prakṛti*. He understands more and more as he advances on the path why Sri Râmakrishna remained from the very beginning of his spiritual life to the end of his earthly days such a docile and devoted child of the Divine Mother, even though he realised the ultimate truths of the Vedânta, Vaishnavism, Christianity, Islam etc. He realises, as Totapuri, the stalwart Vedântin, was made to realise, that the Brahman and His *śakti* are one, and that it is the *bramaśakti* or *mahāmāya* that is the sovereign power, the supreme Creatrix and the sole redeemer of creatures in the world. The Divine as the Divine *śakti*, *Mahāśakti*, becomes, then, for the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga, the solitary object of his

love and devotion from the very beginning of his yogic life. It is not that the *Mahāśakti* enfulfs or eclipses the Divine, as we see in some forms of Tantra. It is rather the Divine that fronts the sādha as *Mahāśakti*, the all-loving, all-redeeming, all-transforming and all-fulfilling Mother of all beings. Overflowing His fatherly solicitude, it is His motherly love and tenderness that rains down upon His struggling children.

This is the divine Love towards which our human love naturally gravitates, once we open to its beatific Force. This is the mellifluous bosom upon which we learn to rest, and revive our spiritual possibilities. This is the golden Fount at which we drink the immortalising draughts of delight. This is the sempiternal Fire of which our souls are inextinguishable sparks, shot here below to illumine the darkness of the material world.

The Integral Yoga fully accepts the synthesis of the *Gitā*, of which love is the central note and the recurring refrain; but it introduces into it the Vedic and the Tāntric element of the Mother-worship, and thereby makes it more powerfully dynamic for life-effectuation. In it, love for the Mother is the first and most important prerequisite; for, without that love and self-offering, even the initial sādhanā would be impossible, let alone the later stages of supramental transformation and perfection. The place of love in this Yoga is, therefore, supreme and absolute. Knowledge is the light of Love, and works the outflow of its creative Force; for, Love in its eternal essence is, as

the Mother says, "the joy of identity", in which there is neither any play of Knowledge, nor of Force, but only the unimaginable bliss of timeless oneness. All knowledge and activity stream out of this Love and lead back into it. If our soul is made of love and delight, as Sri Aurobindo says, then all its movement towards the Divine cannot but be instinct with love and delight. An ecstatic *bhakti* is the very breath of its life and the secret of all its realisation and fulfilment. Sri Râmakrishna brings out the essential truth of *bhakti* when he says in his inimitable, homely imagery, "Knowledge is like a man and *bhakti* like a woman. Knowledge has entry only up to the drawing room of God, but love can enter His inner apartments." Sri Krishna winds up his luminous gospel with the supreme word, *paramam vacah*, which he calls the most secret truth of all, *sarva-guhyatamam*, "Become my-minded, my lover and adorer, a sacrificer to me, bow thyself to me, to me thou shalt come, this is my pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to me. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve." Indeed, the *Gîtâ* makes *bhakti* the crown of its synthesis and the most powerful lever of the soul's ascent to the Divine. "To make the mind one with the divine consciousness, to make the whole of our emotional nature one love of God everywhere, to make all our works one sacrifice to the Lord of the worlds and all our worship and aspiration one adoration of Him and self-surrender, to direct the whole self Godwards in an entire union is the way to rise out of

a mundane into a divine existence.”¹ The Integral Yoga starts with this wide synthesis of the Gitâ, leavened and lit up by *bhakti*, but takes particular care from the very start to put it into the hands of the Mother and gear it to Her supramental Force, so that it may steadily progress towards the splendours of a divine Perfection. The supreme Mother will reveal to our vision and transformed consciousness the Face and Body of the supreme Divine, *tanum swām*.

¹ *Essays on The Gita* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER XXI

LOVE—ITS PLACE AND POWER

PART II

THE love we ordinarily offer to the Divine when we turn towards Him is not always of the purest kind in the beginning. Its nature depends upon the part of our being from which it proceeds. It may be our physical being turning unintelligently, mechanically, inertly, under the dull drive of a secret impulsion, towards the Divine. Our love then takes a physical form—merely external, ritualistic or ceremonial—and partakes somewhat of the nature of our outer human relations. Or it may be our vital-emotional being turning towards the Divine. Our love is then characterised by some strength and intensity of the emotions. But these emotions are usually turbid, excited, disquieting, and often depressing. They are mixed with the desires and demands of our unpurified nature, and manifest the common symptoms of *abhimān*,¹ revolt etc., when those desires and demands are not satisfied. There is always in such forms of *bhakti* an "impatience for result and dissatisfaction if the result is not immediate." These symptoms indicate that the *bhakti* is not pure and selfless,

¹ Love-wrath and petulance.

it is tainted by egoistic cravings and insistences. *Abhimân*, however much it may have been associated with certain legendary forms of *bhakti*, is a disturbing and impeding movement of the vital being. "The sooner you get rid of *abhimân*," writes Sri Aurobindo to a disciple, "the better. Any one who indulges *abhimân* puts himself under the influence of the hostile forces. *Abhimân* has nothing to do with true love, it is, like jealousy, a part of the vital egoism."¹ Indulgence in maudlin emotions is also a vital perversion of true *bhakti*. Emotions are very helpful if they are pure and deep and quiet. "The deeper the emotion, the more intense the *bhakti*, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. It is oftenest through intensity of emotion that the psychic being awakes and there is an opening of the inner doors to the Divine."² But slushy emotionalism and effusive sentimentality are crudely egoistic, and suggest a weakness in the emotional being of the *bhakta*. They waste the energy of the vital and disturb concentration and peace, which are indispensable in *sâdhanâ*. The Vedic and Upanishadic ideal of a perfect calm and control in the whole being—intellectual, emotional, vital and physical—is the best condition for an unhampered progress in the Integral Yoga.

The love and *bhakti* which well out of the psychic are the purest and most spontaneous. But before we consider the nature and power of psychic love, let us be

¹ *On Yoga-II* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

sure of what we mean by *bhakti*. Though we have here taken love and *bhakti* together as two aspects of the same psychic feeling, Sri Aurobindo defines them as follows:

“The nature of *bhakti* is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself; the nature of love is a feeling or a seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the Yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other.”¹

Incidentally we can also learn the distinction between spiritual love and psychic love:

“The love that belongs to the spiritual planes is of a different kind—the psychic has its own more personal love, *bhakti*, surrender. Love in the higher or spiritual mind is more universal and impersonal. The two must go together to make the highest divine love.”²

Psychic love springs from a living sense of essential identity seeking to realise itself in the bliss of perfect union with the Divine. In its widest perfection, it is a yearning for an integral divine union in the context of the terrestrial existence. In fact, the psychic is the bridge between the material world and the world of Spirit. It is because of the psychic that Matter rises towards Spirit in a growing *élan* of love and aspiration,

¹ *On Yoga II*—Vol. IV. by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

and Spirit descends into Matter with its splendour of light and power and harmony and peace. The psychic or the soul is all love and devotion and aspiration, full of an irresistible yearning for the Divine. Its sole business is to turn our entire being Godwards by saturating it with its own love and devotion, and prepare it for the work of divine manifestation. The psychic love is a white flame which is inextinguishable, and it mounts straight towards the Divine. A total and constant self-giving, a self-consecration through service, a progressive surrender of the whole nature, an instinctive recoil from all that is undivine or anti-divine—these are the natural movements of the psychic being, once it is awakened and comes to the front of our nature. Our mind may have its egoistic intellectual gratifications, our vital may have the satisfaction of its desires, our physical being may have its material pleasures and comforts to pursue, but the soul in us has nothing but a one-pointed tension towards the Divine, and a consuming passion for a union and communion with Him. It has no other interest and no other aim in life. Its love for God is, therefore, the purest and most disinterested, and supremely capable of bringing down the transforming light of divine Love upon earth. It is this psychic love that the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga has to develop in himself and infuse into all parts of his being, so that his whole being may become a single flame of love rising towards the Divine. What Sri Aurobindo calls the sun-lit path is the path of the psychic leading the human being to God. It is a

path of unflinching aspiration and spontaneous devotion, and a cheerful trust and confidence in the Divine. There is no room in it for any morbid self-pity or the excessive rigours of austerity; none at all for discouragement and despondency. The calm and serenity of the psychic repel all vital impatience and over-eagerness. Its immaculate sincerity is the guarantee of its fulfilment. It knows how to wait in patience and smiling surrender. The *bhakta* in whom the psychic love has awakened looks for Grace, but "he is ready to wait in perfect reliance—even if need be, all his life—knowing that it will come, never varying in his love and surrender because it does not come now or soon." His peace is impregnable, because his faith is unfathomable; and this faith is not a mere belief or trust, but a luminous certitude, an indubitable knowledge.

In fully evolved psychic love there is always an intense and invincible will to the service of the Divine, for the psychic is aware of its mission in the material world, and cannot remain content only with personal freedom and a passive union with the Divine. It has a will to fulfil the mission of its descent into Matter, which is the manifestation of the Divine here, on earth, and in the human body. It yearns to serve God by fulfilling His Will here.¹ The tendency in the individual towards the

¹ Cf. The Western mystic Ruysbroeck: "Tranquillity according to His essence, activity according to His Nature: absolute repose, absolute fecundity...for this dignity has man been made."

peace and passivity of Nirvâna, or the eternal and impersonal silence of self-extinction in the Brahman, is an oblique mental movement, and argues an imperfect psychic awakening. A fully awakened psychic is an eternal warrior, fighting life after life, if need be, for the transformation of Matter and the revelation of God's Light and Love upon earth. For a perfect illustration of this psychic love and its will and aspiration to divine service, we can only refer to some of the Mother's Prayers:

"For the plenitude of Thy Light we invoke Thee, O Lord! Awaken in us the power to express Thee."

"All is mute in the being as in a desert crypt; but in the heart of the shadow, in the bosom of the silence burns the lamp that can never be extinguished, the fire of an ardent aspiration to know Thee and totally to live Thee."¹

"O Lord, I would be a love so living that it can fill every solitude and assuage every sorrow."

"O Lord, I cry to Thee: make me a burning brazier which consumes all suffering and transforms it into a glad light pouring its rays into the hearts of all!"...

"Grant my prayer: Transform me into a brazier of love and limitless compassion."²

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—Nov. 8, 1914.

² *ibid.* Feb. 2, 1914.

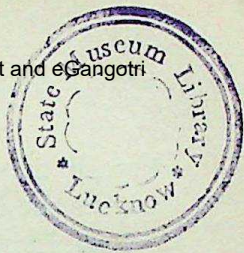
“Divine Master of love, eternal Teacher, Thou guidest our lives. It is in Thee alone that we would live; enlighten our consciousness, guide our steps, and grant that we may do the maximum of what we can do, utilising all our energies solely to serve Thee.”¹

The power of psychic love is infinite, for when it unites with the divine Love, it can draw freely upon the latter's omnipotence. The psychic is not content to give only itself to the Divine, it aspires and endeavours to give all its nature and all its instruments of expression also to Him, so that He may transform and illumine them, and use them as perfected means of His manifestation in the material life. When psychic love is united with the divine Love and the psychic will with the divine Will, there is no limit to the possibilities of divine manifestation. All knowledge is within the reach of psychic love, and all power of effectuation. Whenever and wherever the divine Light or the divine force has been brought down into human life, it has been invariably by the power of psychic love, and not by any other means. The mind's adoration and the heart's love and devotion are powerful aids to the development of psychic love, but in themselves they are incapable of reaching the Divine Love and bringing it down to transform human life. The mind's interest and aspiration may be damped by the frosts of life, and the heart's ardours even

¹ *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother Jan. 30, 1914.

may be quenched, but the psychic love, once awakened, knows no flagging or cooling—it goes on growing in depth and intensity till it unites with the divine Love and becomes a glowing focus of its transforming force. A life of psychic love is a life of unshakable peace and immeasurable bliss, because it is essentially a life lived in the Divine, beyond the motives of the ego and the goad of desires. It is a life of perfect self-fulfilment, because it is based on unreserved self-giving. Freedom, purity, peace, happiness, power and knowledge, all flow out of the psychic to fulfil the human being who has kindled this white flame in himself and feeds it with constant sacrifice.

But for this fulfilment it is essential that the psychic should rise out of the individual moulds of human nature, and widen and heighten itself into universality and transcendence. The love of the psychic being, emancipated from the whirl of human emotions, must launch upon the Infinite, and unite with the Love of the Supreme. This union of the Divine Love and the psychic love, rendered fully dynamic in life, is the highest secret of the supramental transformation and manifestation on earth.



CHAPTER XXII

KNOWLEDGE—THE LIGHT THAT FULFILS

PART I

WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE

IN yogic parlance and spiritual philosophy knowledge does not mean mental knowledge. Mental knowledge is a knowledge of objects taken as separate integers or aspects, and not viewed as indivisible parts of a universal whole. Even when it arrives at a synthesis, it is an aggregate or a sum-total that it grasps, and never the essential unity of things. Besides, the mind can know only the surface of things, their appearances, and not their essential substance and reality. "Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. Even with what exists only as obvious parts and fractions, Mind establishes this fiction of its ordinary commerce that they are things with which it can deal separately and not merely as aspects of a whole.... It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rightly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession.... Mind may divide, multiply, add, subtract, but it cannot get

beyond the limits of this mathematics.... Mind cannot possess the infinite..."¹

Real knowledge, on the contrary, is knowledge by identity. I cannot really know a person unless I identify myself with him. An observation of his ways of life, his nature and speech and manners and dealings with others, can give me only a superficial idea of him; and it often happens that my idea is found in the end to be erroneous, being based on the misleading data of the senses, and an illegitimate use of imagination and conjecture. Tricked by appearances, I sometimes mistake a saint for a scoundrel, and a scoundrel for a saint. Many a betrayal in love and friendship can be rightly traced to the cheat of the senses. But when I identify myself with a person spiritually, that is to say, when my consciousness becomes one with his consciousness, I know his real nature; not only what is overt and superficially or deceptively evident, but also what is deep down in him, vibrant or latent in his being, and subtly influencing his thoughts and feelings. There is no possibility of error in this identification: for, it gives me a knowledge of the man as he is, and not only as he appears to be. In identifying myself with him, I become his self and his nature; the major and minor vibrations of his consciousness rise in my consciousness, and I can easily know them for what they are. The truth behind this knowledge by identity is that existence is one, Being is one, consciousness is

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

one, and when I go down to the all-pervading bedrock consciousness, I become united with anything and everything that it contains, the depth and range of this identification depending upon the development and power of my own consciousness. The less the dominance of the ego in me, the greater the possibility of my union with the world and with God; for, God is my own supreme Self and the world is nothing but His manifestation in Himself in terms of His own multiplicity. Indeed, I can know only myself and nothing else. I can have no knowledge of an object which is fundamentally alien to my nature and consciousness—two disparates having nothing in common between them can never meet; and without such a meeting and contact there can be no knowledge. If contradictories are found to meet and unite in life, it is because fundamentally they are one, meant to act as complementaries in the manifold patterns of Nature. The Upanishads say that the Atman or Self has become all these beings and things (becomings)—*ātmā abhūt sarvabhūtāni*; and, basing their ontology on this truth, they declare that when That is known all is known, *tasmin vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātam bhavati*. And indicating the way to this knowledge by identification, they inculcate a plunge into the depths of our being, away from the confused din of the surface and its trenchant divisions and differences. Not that the appearances are unreal or illusory, but they are passing, transitory and delusive—they do not reveal the indivisible and imperishable Reality that dwells in them.

It is only by being *āvṛttacakṣu*, by turning round our eyes inwards, that we can discover the *guhāhitam*, the dweller of the cave, the *purāṇam*, the Ancient of days, who has become all this that is, *idam sarvam*, and is yet beyond them, *vahiṣca*. "The method of Yoga in knowledge must always be a turning of the eye inward, and, so far as it looks upon outer things, a penetrating of the surface appearances to get at the one eternal reality within them."¹ The core and essence of things and creatures, the basic harmony and unity of their existence, the truth and purpose of their becoming in Time and Space, the meaning of their mutations, and the significance of their interrelation and interaction, all lie beyond the farthest confines of our waking mind, and inaccessible to our normal thought and reason. We may, if we like, deny their reality in the overweening pride of our sense-bound mind; but truth cannot be thus denied for ever with impunity. Besides, there is no possibility of a permanent denial; for the same truth shines in the heart of each one of us, and, when the clouds of doubt and denial roll away, and the mind learns to perceive its own inherent limitations and its crippling bondage to the superficial aspects of life, is bound to emerge and change the denial into an ardent and grateful acceptance. The incompetent pride of the intellect falls to the ground as the indwelling divinity rises into self-expression.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo speaks in "The Life Divine" of a fourfold order of knowledge from which our surface cognition derives. "The original and fundamental way of knowing, native to the occult self in things, is a knowledge by identity; the second, derivative, is a knowledge by direct contact associated at its roots with a secret knowledge by identity or starting from it, but actually separated from its source and therefore powerful but incomplete in its cognition; the third is a knowledge by separation from the object of observation, but still with a direct contact as its support or even a partial identity; the fourth is a complete separative knowledge which relies on a machinery of indirect contact, a knowledge by acquisition which is yet, without being conscious of it, a rendering or bringing up of the contents of a pre-existent inner awareness and knowledge. A knowledge by identity, a knowledge by intimate direct contact, a knowledge by separative direct contact, a wholly separative knowledge by indirect contact are the four cognitive methods of Nature".¹ The last is the normal method of our mind, which is incapable of entering into the objects of its perception and identifying itself with them. Our mind cannot know the external objects in the same way as it knows its own inner movements—its thoughts, feelings and sensations—with the same immediacy and intimacy. It contacts the objects through the senses, and in so doing, it meets with only figures,

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

images and representations of them, and not their essential reality. It is this inherent deficiency of the separative knowledge by indirect contact that gives a certain plausibility to the theory of Phenomenalism.¹ The third method is characterised by a simultaneity of direct contact and separation between the knower and the object of knowledge, sometimes or partially sustained by identity. It is typically illustrated in our knowledge of our own subjective movements, in which there is a direct contact and at the same time a detached observation; but it is the reason that observes the inner workings of the being, and in so observing, it leans more on the side of the workings than on the essential identity, which remains behind as a subtle, supporting awareness. In the second method the direct contact is at once more intimate and effective, and the separation entailed in the observation is not so clear-cut as in the third. There are ample possibilities and even an obvious certainty of error in the fourth method, which pivots upon a trenchant separation between the knower and the object of knowledge. It depends upon the misleading data of the senses, and deals only with the appearances of things. There are possibilities of error even in the second and third methods, but they are fewer, and the chances of arriving at truth much greater. But it is only by the first method, the

¹ This was also the starting point of the radical change Kant's mind underwent in regard to the unknowability of the Things-in-themselves.

method of identity, that the truth of a thing can be realised and its knowledge gained. In identity there is a union between the consciousness of the knower and that of the object of knowledge—for there is consciousness, evolved or involved, in every object—and the knower knows his object of knowledge in himself, the barriers of material Space melting away in the spiritual extension of his consciousness. “They see the Self in the Self by the Self”, is the Gitâ’s description of the highest form of knowledge by identity. So long as there is separation between the knower and the object of his knowledge, the knowledge acquired cannot but be indirect, and what it brings to the knower is not truth, but only half-truth or even falsehood.

If we study the lives of the mystics, we come across innumerable instances of the knowledge by identity. Compared with this knowledge, our scientific, psychological and philosophical knowledge appears as pale mental constructions, shaky improvisations of the analytical or speculative intellect, a tenuous network of mere hypotheses. When Christ says, “I and my Father in Heaven are one,” it is his inmost consciousness identifying itself with the infinite Consciousness of the Supreme that expresses the spiritual oneness, and not his philosophic mind or even his intuitive intellect. When Sri Chaitanya enters into the *mahābhāva*, he feels himself so much identified with the Supreme that he visibly appears divinely transfigured, his normal consciousness of the devotee of God being eclipsed and swallowed up

in the all-mastering consciousness of the Supreme Being. Sri Râmakrishna on his mystic journey through the higher planes to the highest transcendence of *saccidânanda* identifies himself successively with the planes of Power and Light and Bliss to such an extent that he becomes at the moment of identification nothing but Power or Light or Bliss.

Describing his identification with the plane of universal Power, he says, "I was so much identified with that (universal) Power that I felt I could tear the sun from its orbit and dash it to atoms." When he was identified with the plane of Light, he felt as if he was immersed in an ocean of Light—it was Light and Light everywhere. Once, when a man was treading over a lawn, Sri Râmakrishna felt in himself the pain of the trampled grass, and shrieked out in agony. When he saw some of his foremost disciples for the first time, he at once recognised each of them and knew who they had been in their past lives, and what they had come for again to the earth. And his predictions about them proved absolutely true. If we turn to the experiences of the Mother as transcribed in her Prayers and Meditations, we get graphic descriptions of the knowledge by identity.

"As from a summit which has been attained, one discovers a vast horizon, so, O Lord, when one's consciousness is identified with this intermediate realm between Thy unity and this manifested world, one participates at once in Thy Infinitude and the realisation of the world. It is as though one were at a centre in which the conscious-

ness, wholly steeped in Thy effective Power, may direct the ray of Thy forces upon the lowest instrument moving centrally amidst its brother instruments. From the height of these transcendent regions, the unity of the physical substance is very evidently visible, and yet the body which serves as a particular instrument in the material realm, appears with a special precision and clearness like a more vigorous point in the midst of this whole, at once multiple and unique, in which the forces circulate equally.

“This perception has not left me since yesterday. It has installed itself as something definitive, and all the outer activity which, in appearance, continues as usual, has taken the mechanical character of a marvellously articulated and animated toy moved from the height of its seat by my consciousness which is no longer individual but is still universal, and that means that it is not yet completely immersed in Thy Oneness. All the laws of the individual manifestation clearly appeared to me, but in a manner so synthetic, so global, so simultaneous, that it is impossible to express it in our ordinary language.”¹

It is evident from the above quotation that the Mother is speaking of her experience of that plane of consciousness which is intermediate between the featureless unity of the Divine Existence and the multitudinous flux of the manifested world. The experience is born of identification, and it gives her a perfect knowledge of the transcendent

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—May 15, 1914.

Infinitudes above and the universal forms and forces below. Another example will give the most conclusive evidence of the knowledge that is attained by identity:

“My heart has fallen asleep, down to the very depths of my being.

“The whole earth is in a stir and agitation of perpetual change; all life enjoys and suffers, endeavours, struggles, conquers, is destroyed and formed again.

“My heart has fallen asleep down to the very depths of my being.

“In all these innumerable and manifold elements, I am the Will that moves, the Thought that acts, the Force that realises, the Matter that is put in motion.

“My heart has fallen asleep down to the very depths of my being.

“No more personal limits, no more any individual action, no more any separatist concentration creating conflict; nothing but a single and infinite Oneness.

“My heart has fallen asleep down to the very depths of my being.”¹

In this experience the Mother has been completely identified with the material universe, its life and its innumerable and manifold elements. This identification gives her a perfect knowledge of the inner and outer workings of the material world. But that is only a tiny part of the expe-

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—April 10, 1917.

rience. Beyond the material world, she is identified with the Will that moves it, the Thought that acts in it, and the Force that realises itself. And even beyond all this, she is identified with the fathomless silence of the ineffable Absolute. She commands all knowledge in this integral experience, for she is identified with the One in all the ways of His Being and in all forms of His self-manifestation. She knows at once the essential and phenomenal truths of existence as truths of her own self and its becomings, for, it is an experience in which "it is not a second or other than and separate from himself that he sees, speaks to, hears, knows."¹

In spiritual life the ultimate aim of knowledge is not mental understanding or enlightenment, but being and becoming. One can know the Brahman only by becoming the Brahman; or, to put it inversely, (which is the same thing), one becomes the Brahman by knowing the Brahman—*brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*. Therefore, it can be said that knowledge begins only when we have passed beyond all mental knowings. So long as we cherish our mental knowledge and depend upon our intelligence and reason and imaginative reflection in our search for Truth, we remain imprisoned in our mental constructions, severed from the Infinite. To transcend the mind is an imperative necessity of our evolution, unless, of course, we elect to describe a downward curve of culture and

¹ *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*.

allow our mental faculties to be employed in the service of our blind desires, and the god-like elements in us to be darkened and disfigured by our animal appetities and passions. There is already a great danger of such a devolution in human culture, which must be obviated before it has undone the labour of the ages. Salvation lies in knowledge—knowledge which is the Light of Spirit illumining its own Truth. “There is nothing in the world as pure as knowledge,” says the *Gitâ*. “Even if thou art the worst of sinners, thou wilt cross over the ocean of sin by the boat of knowledge.” “As a blazing fire consumes a whole heap of wood, so does the fire of knowledge burn up all actions and their consequences.” “Therefore, O Bhârata (Arjuna), by the sword of knowledge cut off this doubt of your mind born of ignorance, and bestir yourself to practise Yoga.” When the Light of knowledge shines out in our being, the mask of our mortal humanity drops away from our consciousness, and we realise the infinity and eternity of our essential Self and Spirit. Knowledge delivers us from all bondage and suffering, and ushers us into the freedom and bliss of our spiritual existence. It illumines and widens our love for the Divine, and impeccably guides our action into the channels of a divine fulfilment. Without knowledge, love, however intense, would be narrow and fanatical, and our action, however disinterested, would lack the authentic drive of the divine Will in us—it would not be God’s direct action in us. The Light of knowledge is the herald of freedom and the prophecy of divine fulfilment.

We shall now proceed to consider the means, grades and object of knowledge, as taught by Sri Aurobindo, and conclude this chapter with an indication of the harmonious fulfilment knowledge is meant to bestow upon the sâdhaka of the Integral Yoga.

CHAPTER XXIII

KNOWLEDGE—THE LIGHT THAT FULFILS

PART II

MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE

WE have said that a turning of the mind's eye inwards is the first indispensable means of attaining knowledge; but it is not a mere introspection or a superficial introversion as practised by the modern psychologist that we mean—it is a plunge into the very depths of our being. The mind, the heart, the will, all must seek to know and unite with the Divine who dwells within us and to whom we eternally belong. It is not a mere intellectual curiosity that should be the motive power behind our seeking for knowledge, but the irrepressible urge, the spontaneous *élan* of our consciousness towards Him, without whom life has no meaning and the world appears but a dreary wilderness. It should be a conscious and deliberate plunge from the appearances of things to their Reality, a resolute exploration of the kingdom of Truth.

This urge or *élan* is not foreign to earthly life. In fact, it is the mainspring of all its evolutionary progress. Bergson was inspired only by the vital aspect of it, but it has other deeper and subtler aspects, an intuitive

contemplation of which reveals to us the ultimate meaning and destiny of life itself. It can be called a thirst or a veiled aspiration for light. In the plants we observe this thirst as a biological impulse and necessity—a subconscious straining towards light. In the animals the love of light, the keen sensuous delight in the freshness and warmth of the sun, or in the soft, clinging radiance of the moon, is a natural instinct and an outstanding characteristic of evolutionary life. The higher the grade of life, the greater the yearning for light. In man it is a constantly attested fact. Darkness stifles and depresses him, whereas light always gives him new life and energy and confidence. That is why in the Upanishads the sun is hailed as *prāṇaḥ prajānām*, the life of all creatures. But in man this yearning for light tends to transcend its sensuous aspect, and become an aspiration and a seeking for the inner light, the illumination of knowledge. The more he evolves in consciousness, the more he feels a gravitational pull towards the centre of light within him. Knowledge becomes an object of his devoted pursuit, not so much for the material benefits it may confer, as for itself, for the light that it kindles within him. A retreat or plunge into the core of his being becomes then a necessity of his existence, an irresistible evolutionary urge within him. "He is the secret Self in all existences and does not manifest Himself to the vision: yet is He seen by the seers of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding", says the Kathopanishad; and the way to realise the secret Self is indicated as follows: "Let the wise man restrain speech in his mind.

and mind in Self, and knowledge in the Great Self, and that again let him restrain in the Self that is at peace." It is this going deeper and deeper in oneself that is the first indispensable means of knowledge. It has afterwards to be supplemented by an upward movement, an ascent, which consummates the soul's quest for knowledge.

PURIFICATION

But the plunge is not possible so long as our being is unpurified. Our desires and attachments and passions and habitual interests absorb us to such an extent that we find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to turn our gaze within and dive into our depths. Purification is, therefore, of the utmost importance as a preliminary to the inner plunge. Rajayoga rightly lays stress on *yama* and *niyama*, the purificatory self-discipline, as an essential preliminary to *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.¹ But, whereas in the Rajayoga purification is directed towards the stilling of the active being of man, so that his consciousness, undistracted by the outer movements, may flow into the depths and realise there the Self or the Divine, in the Integral Yoga it is meant to serve a dual purpose: 1) helping the inner plunge in a comprehensive concentration, and 2) paving the way for a total and radical transformation of nature.

¹ Concentration, contemplation, trance.

“Along with purity and as a help to bring it about, concentration. Purity and concentration are indeed two aspects, feminine and masculine, passive and active, of the same status of being; purity is the condition in which concentration becomes entire, rightly effective, omnipotent; by concentration purity does its works and without it would only lead to a state of peaceful quiescence and eternal repose.”¹

Purity in its initial stages means freedom from all desire and attachment. But as purification proceeds, its negative aspect of renunciation² is replaced by a positive method of cleansing, quickening, coordinating and harmonising the inner instruments (*antahkaran*) on which we have dwelt at some length in chapter XI on “The purification of Nature”. Our object in the Integral Yoga being, not a renunciation or rejection of Nature, but its transformation and utilisation for the divine manifestation, purification is necessarily a long and elaborate process, which steadily merges into the eventual process of transformation. The greater the growth of purity in the being, the greater the steadfastness in concentration.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration is a very important means in the Integral Yoga, and bears a much wider sense in it than in any other

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo or *On Yoga*—I.

² Renunciation in the sense in which it is used in the *Gītā—tyāga*,] inner abandonment of desire and attachment and egoism.

yoga. We should, therefore, try to understand what it actually means and how it can be employed for the attainment of the object we have in view. "...In the path of knowledge as it is practised in India concentration is used in a special and more limited sense. It means that removal of the thought from all distracting activities of the mind and that concentration of it on the idea of the One by which the soul rises out of the phenomenal into the one Reality. It is by the thought that we dissipate ourselves in the phenomenal; it is by the gathering back of the thought into itself that we must draw ourselves back into the real. Concentration has three powers by which this aim can be effected. By concentration on anything whatsoever we are able to know that thing, to make it deliver up its concealed secrets; we must use this power to know not things, but the one Thing-in-itself. By concentration again the whole will can be gathered up for the acquisition of that which is still ungrasped, still beyond us; this power, if it is sufficiently sincere, sure of itself, faithful to itself alone, absolute in faith, we can use for the acquisition of any object whatsoever; but we ought to use it not for the acquisition of the many objects which the world offers to us, but to grasp spiritually that one object worthy of pursuit which is also the one subject worthy of knowledge. By concentration of our whole being on one status of itself, we can become whatever we choose; we can become, for instance, even if we were before a mass of weaknesses and fears, a mass instead of strength and courage, we can become

all a great purity, holiness and peace or a single universal soul of love; but we ought, it is said, to use this power to become not even these things, high as they may be in comparison with what we now are, but rather to become that which is above all things and free from all action and attributes, the pure and absolute Being.”¹

But the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo does not make such an exclusive use of concentration; for, its object is not only the transcendent status of the Divine, but the integral Divine in all His statuses and in all His aspects and modes of manifestation. The concentration it makes use of is an all-inclusive, waking concentration, which does not leave out of its ambit the worlds of beings and their multifarious activities. It embraces the universal immanence as well as the supracosmic transcendence of the Divine, His multiplicity as well as His unity, the principles and powers that govern and develop creation as well as the ineffable Truth from which these principles and powers derive. It comprehends the manifold play of the qualities of the Divine as well as the unqualified status of the Absolute, *nirguna*. “We must aim indeed at the Highest, the Source of all, the Transcendent, but not to the exclusion of that which it transcends, rather as the source of an established experience and supreme state of the soul which shall transform all other states and remould our consciousness of the world into the form of its secret Truth. We do

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

not seek to excise from our being all consciousness of the universe, but to realise God, Truth and Self in the universe as well as transcendent of it. We shall seek therefore not only the Ineffable, but also His manifestation as infinite being, consciousness and bliss embracing the universe and at play in it.”¹

SAMADHI

It is clear that when we speak of the plunge or purification or concentration, we attach to each of these terms a sense which is not its current accepted sense. We have seen what purification means in the Integral Yoga. We have understood also the object, nature and scope of concentration as practised in it. When concentration deepens and widens to its utmost, we reach an all-embracing state of consciousness which includes at once the essential truth of Spirit and the dynamic truth of Its universal manifestation. We can call this state *samādhi*, but we must be careful to remember that it is not the Rājayogic *samādhi*, in which the Yogi passes out of all consciousness of the world into the absorbed peace or bliss of the universal Immutable or the supracosmic Undifferentiated. The Gitâ gives to the word ‘*samādhi*’ a much wider connotation than the traditional one. “It is this calm, desireless, griefless fixity of the *buddhi* in self-poise and self-knowledge to

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

which the Gitâ gives the name of *samādhi*. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attractions and repulsions, the alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things: it is directed wholly to the Divine even when to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world.”¹

In the Integral Yoga *samādhi* bears a somewhat similar meaning. Describing it, Sri Aurobindo says, “Not merely a state withdrawn from all consciousness of the outward, withdrawn even from all consciousness of the inward into that which exists beyond both whether as seed of both or transcendent even of their seed-state; but a settled existence in the One and Infinite, united and identified with it, and this status to remain whether we abide in the waking condition in which we are conscious of the forms of things or we withdraw into the inward activity which dwells in the play of the principles of things, the play of their names and typical forms or we soar to the condition of static inwardness where we arrive at the principles themselves and at the principle of all principles, the seed of name and form. For the soul

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

that has arrived at the essential *samādhi* and is settled in it (*samādhista*) in the sense the Gitā attaches to the word, has that which is fundamental to all experience and cannot fall from it by any experience however distracting to one who has not yet ascended the summit. It can embrace all in the scope of its being without being bound by any or deluded or limited.”¹

A unified state of consciousness, which remains permanently poised in the integral Divine, embracing all His statuses and modes of universal working as well as His ineffable transcendence, is, then, the perfection of concentration or *samādhi*, according to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. No doubt it is a difficult achievement, but nothing short of it can lead us to the perfect realisation of the aim we have set before us. The Divine is not only One, but also manifold and multiple in His self-expression; He is not only static, but also dynamic; He is not only transcendent, but also immanent in the universe of His own creation; He is not only the unthinkable Absolute, but also all these contingents and relativities of which we are constantly conscious. We have to know all these and reconcile all these apparent contraries in an all-harmonising experience, if we want to unite with Him in all His ways, *sarvabhāvena*. The Divine does not forfeit His nameless unity when He assumes the multiple names and forms of the universe; He does not lose His eternal silence when He engages

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

in the ceaseless whirl of cosmic activity; He does not fall from His timeless eternity when He plunges into the flux of Time. How can we, then, unite with Him in all these modes and ways of His being, unless we attain to that supreme consciousness which is capable of multiple concentration? The traditional method of *samādhi* or trance may be needed sometimes to effect a first entry into some remote or recondite region of the being, or for some specific work on a particular plane of consciousness by a momentarily exclusive concentration; but the consummating achievement is the power of multiple concentration, normalised in the waking consciousness and commanding a total and simultaneous knowledge of God and soul and Nature and life. It is this total knowledge that Sri Krishna means when he speaks of the rare yogi—one among a thousand of those who have realised the Self—who attains to the knowledge of Him in all the principles of His existence, *tattwatah*. It is an all-inclusive concentration that alone can lead to this knowledge and union.

The movement that starts as an inner plunge culminates as *samādhi* or multiple concentration. The inner plunge may be in the beginning a headlong intensive absorption, but it gradually assumes an expansive movement, spreading inwards and upwards and downwards and all around, resulting in a greater and greater depth and extension of knowledge. The eye of knowledge scans always the inner skies in the heart of all things and beings; and even when it looks at the appearances of things, it looks

from within outwards, and so knows both the seed and the tree at the same time. Nothing can be hidden from it, for nothing is outside its illimitable range. It sees all, because it sees the One in all, and the One as all.

How can this all-comprehending *samādhi* or multiple concentration be achieved? Along with the inner plunge and the inner poise one has to practise constant concentration on the Divine—at all hours of the day and night (one has to learn to maintain it even in sleep) and in all that one does. In the Integral Yoga, it is not enough that one concentrates or meditates on the Divine at some particular hours, and lets the mind and heart remain occupied with their habitual pursuits, however high and idealistic they may be, for the rest of the day. The consciousness of the sâdhaka must learn how to remain constantly concentrated on the Divine—to see Him, feel Him, think of Him, touch Him, love Him, and serve Him, at every moment of his life. This constant concentration need not be so very difficult as it appears to be. The secret of success in it lies in love. What does one do in regard to the person one loves? One has not to adopt strenuous means in order to concentrate on that person, rather it becomes difficult not to concentrate. A similar loving concentration on the Divine with the heart desiring Him, the mind thinking of Him, the will seeking to obey His guidance at every moment, and the body eager to serve Him as a faithful instrument, is the best way of uniting with Him and knowing Him by identity. But this concentration must be an active

or dynamic concentration, and not passive or quietistic. A passive concentration can lead only to the silence of the Immutable, but not to the integral being of the Divine. A concentration of the mind, heart, will and the physical being of the sâdhaka, fired by the psychic love¹ for the Divine and maintained unflagging even in the midst of the full flood of life's activities, is the indispensable pre-requisite in the initial stages of the Integral Yoga. It is, in fact, nothing short of a synthesis of knowledge, love and action—every action done as a conscious and deliberate offering—brought to bear upon a global and irrevocable orientation to the Divine and a moved seeking for an integral union with Him. Concentration, which is exclusively an affair of the mental consciousness in the path of *jñāna yoga*—though it is doubtful how far it can be fully achieved without the aid of the heart and the life-will—becomes, if we can say so, an organic and harmonic gravitation of the whole human being towards the Divine, and culminates in a settled, dynamic poise in Him.

A word may not be out of place here in regard to the difference between meditation and concentration. Sri Aurobindo brings it out in the following words: "Concentration is a gathering together of the consciousness and either centralising at one point or turning on a single object, e.g., the Divine: there can also be a gathered condition throughout the whole being, not at a point. In

¹ The coming of the psychic to the front and its guidance of the nature makes for the greatest spontaneity in loving concentration.

meditation it is not indispensable to gather like this, one can simply remain with a quiet mind thinking on one subject for observing what comes in the consciousness and dealing with it.”¹

Another thing which is very helpful in concentration is calm and peace. According to Sri Aurobindo, “The best help for concentration is to receive the Mother’s calm and peace in your mind. It is there above you—only the mind and its centres have to open to it.”²

A constant, loving concentration, fortified by a thorough-going purification of nature, and based on an unshakable peace and calm, is sure to open the closed doors and lead the sâdhaka to that completeness of knowledge which not only liberates but perfects and fulfils.

¹ On Yoga—II by *Sri Aurobindo*.

² *ibid.*

CHAPTER XXIV

KNOWLEDGE—THE LIGHT THAT FULFILLS

CATEGORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

PART III

ACCORDING to ancient Indian tradition there are three principal grades or categories of spiritual knowledge: *ātmajñāna* or knowledge of one's individual soul or self; *brahmajñāna* or knowledge of the universal and transcendent Self or Spirit; and *bhagavatjñāna* or knowledge of the Divine, the sole and supreme Being. It is essential to keep this distinction well in mind lest we confound the ultimate values of the spiritual life and fail to appreciate the comprehensive greatness of the aim of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Ordinarily—and this is a fairly general acceptance—by knowledge one understands the knowledge of the individual soul or self, *ātmajñāna*. “Know thyself” is considered the highest counsel of wisdom. In Sāṅkhya, knowledge of the *puruṣa* or the individual self is regarded as the ultimate knowledge. Jainism, taking the Sāṅkhyan standpoint, preaches as the highest knowledge *kevalajñāna* or knowledge of the naked soul, divested of all kârmic covering and resplendent with its own light. There have been many teachers who have taught nothing

but the knowledge of the soul as the end and summit of all spiritual attainment. If a man has had an experience of his soul as an immortal entity, independent of mind and life and body, and blissfully free in its immaculate purity, we look upon him as a perfect *jñānī* or one who has attained to the supreme knowledge. We hardly pause to think that there can be a knowledge higher and fuller than that of the individual soul. It is true that "our primary aim in knowledge must be to realise our own supreme Self more than that self in others or as the Lord of Nature or as the All; for that is the pressing need of the individual, to arrive at the highest truth of his own being...." It is also true that when a man has realised his soul, he can very well know what Nature is in her phenomenal working. The knowledge of *prakṛti* or *karma* follows as a natural corollary to the knowledge of the inner *puruṣa*. But there still remains the possibility of a higher knowledge, and a yet higher. *Atmajñāna* effects our liberation from the trammels of Nature, but does not necessarily impart a knowledge of the essential unity of all existence, and of the divine origin of this fettering and deluding Nature. The human soul has to transcend its individuality and realise the oneness of all existence; for, an indivisible oneness is the ultimate and fundamental truth of existence. And beyond this unity, it has to widen into That which is at once one and multiple and yet transcendent of both its unity and its multiplicity, and in which we perceive the transcendental divine aspect and original term of what we here know as *prakṛti*. The knowledge

of that highest Ground of all existence and the omnipresent Reality of our being is, therefore, the completest knowledge to which we have to aspire and attain.

Beyond the knowledge of the soul there is the knowledge of the universal and transcendent Self or Spirit, *brahma-jñāna*. The individual soul, emancipated from the meshes of Nature, and cured of all self-identification with her passing modes, may, if it will, enter into the infinite unity and immutability of the Brahman. This is a realisation which is higher and wider than the final goal of the Sāṅkhya and Jainism. One realises in it the unity of the universal Self, and may even rise from it into an experience of the utter Transcendence—calm, still and ineffably profound. In the beginning, this Self may appear as static, inactive and impersonal, sustaining but not participating in the world movement; and in the intense absorption of our concentration on it, we may come to look upon the world as unsubstantial and shadowy, a mere procession of phantasmal forms. We may even come to regard it as illusory and false, *māyā*, *mithyā*. But if we do not stop short at this realisation of the immobile immanence of the Brahman, we shall see that it constitutes all things and beings and “dwells within all of them, governing all their motion.” “As the ether both contains and is, as it were, contained in the jar, so this Self both contains and inhabits all existences, not in a physical but in a spiritual sense, and is their reality.”¹

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

This Brahman we have to become and experience in the triple way referred to in the Upanishad: we have to see all existences in the Self, the Self in all existences, and the Self as having become all existences. All names and forms, all forces and energies and their tangled movements in the world have to be seen and embraced as the one Brahman in Its multiple self-representation, and not ignored or spurned as phantasmal or false. This is, indeed, a high and profound experience, which may seem to most of us to be the very crown of all spiritual realisation—the experience of the Brahman everywhere, in all things and at all times, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*. It gives a knowledge which is essentially perfect and definitive, a knowledge which does not divide existence into two, Spirit and Matter, or Reality and Illusion, but reconciles and fuses all apparent contraries and antinomies into an integral unity. “The knowledge that leaves a yawning gulf between the two can be no ultimate knowledge, however logical it may seem to the analytical intellect or however satisfactory to a self-dividing experience. True knowledge must arrive at a oneness which embraces even though it exceeds the totality of things, not at a oneness which is incapable of it and rejects it. For there can be no such original unbridgeable chasm of duality either in the All-existence itself or between any transcendent Oneness and the All-existent. And as in knowledge, so in experience and self-fulfilment. The experience which finds at the summit of things such an original unbridgeable chasm between two contrary

principles and can at most succeed in overleaping it so that it has to live in one or the other, but cannot embrace and unify, is not the ultimate experience.”¹

But though this knowledge of the omnipresent Brahman is essentially and fundamentally comprehensive and complete, yet it is not integrally and dynamically perfect. It is *jñāna*, but not *viññāna*; and the fusion of the two is the supreme knowledge: the general and essential knowledge, and the particular and specific knowledge; the knowledge of the One and the knowledge of the All, the Many; the knowledge of the eternal silence and that of the eternal dynamism—an all-embracing, all-explaining knowledge of Truth, *satyam*, *ṛtam*. The knowledge of the Brahman liberates, exalts and illumines, but it does not fulfil the manifold aspiration of the human soul. For the knowledge that fulfils we have then to ascend to the Supreme, the Divine, the Being of our being, the *Para-Puruṣa* of the Upanishad or the *Puruṣottama* of the *Gitā*. The deepest mystery of existence, the ultimate truth of our soul’s individuality, the teleological significance of its descent into the material world, the secret of our heart’s love for the Divine, and its yearning for His infinite joy and love and beauty, the hidden sense of our aspiration for perfection and fulfilment—all these are resolved and revealed in the all-illuminating Light of the supreme knowledge, the knowledge of the *Parama-*

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

Puruṣa. What is felt as somewhat vague and imprecise, specifically incomplete and incomprehensible, in the knowledge of the Brahman, acquires definiteness, clarity, and completeness in the light of this highest knowledge. It explains how and why the Absolute Brahman, needing nothing, desiring nothing, has assumed all these myriad names and forms and consented to be limited and divided—even though apparently or phenomenally—and pass through pain and suffering and death. It reveals the Divine, not only in the unchanging essence of His existence, but also in all the principles of His being, *tattwataḥ*. It reveals Him as the supreme Person, the original truth and Archetype of our phenomenal personality, and yet also the eternal Impersonal, bound neither by His personality nor by His impersonality. It reveals Him as at once *nirguṇa* or transcendent of all qualities, and *ananta-guṇa*, possessor of infinite qualities. It reveals Him as the silent and passive Brahman, and at the same time the transcendent Creator and Master of the universe.

There is a general conception that the Unmanifest is the most transcendental term of the supreme Reality and that *akṣara* or the Immutable is the ultimate truth of existence. But the Upanishad is categorical on the point—and the *Gītā* fully concurs with it—that the supreme *Puruṣa* is beyond the Unmanifest (*avyaktāttu paraḥ Puruṣa*), and superior to the *akṣara* (*akṣarādapi-cottamaḥ*). There is nothing higher than the *Puruṣā—Puruṣāṇna param kiñcit*; He is the ultimate and highest goal, the sole Refuge of all. This is a truth that has to be

kept constantly in view in the Integral Yoga, if we are to conquer the strong, traditional penchant of the Indian mind for the unmoving peace and passivity of the *akṣara*. The knowledge of the *akṣara* is called *vidyā* (*sā vidyā yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate*), and the knowledge of the *kṣara puruṣa* or the phenomenal universal being is called *avidyā*; but the integral knowledge of the *Paramātman* comprehends both *vidyā* and *avidyā* and yet transcends them, as the Upanishad rightly holds.

The integral knowledge is the knowledge of *Saccidānanda*; not only of His *sat* or existence, or of His *cit* or Consciousness-Force, or of His *ānanda* or bliss, each taken separately, but of the inalienable unity of the three, the ineffable trinity. By this knowledge we know *Saccidānanda* as an infinite and eternal self-conscious Existence, which the orthodox Vedāntin envisages as the final object of his spiritual endeavour; we know Him as an infinite and eternal Consciousness-Force, which is the goal of Tantra and the Yoga of divine works; and we know Him as an infinite and eternal Self-Bliss, *ānanda*, which is the supreme status, *param pada* or *param dhama* of the yoga of love and devotion. The integral knowledge includes all these aspects and attributes of the Divine, even while it exceeds them all in its giant embrace of the unthinkable and relationless Absolute. It is an all-reconciling, all-harmonising knowledge which reveals to us *saccidānanda* in all His statuses and on all the planes of existence. Possessed of it, we can live simultaneously in the consciousness of the Absolute Transcendent and of the

Absolute manifested in all universal relations; in the Impersonal and in Him who has revealed Himself as all these personalities; in That which is beyond all qualities and in the complex play of infinite qualities; in the fathomless silence beyond, where nothing stirs, and in the ceaseless hum and whirl of the cosmic energies. We realise the Divine as the Supreme Person, the sempiternal Being, who knows all, sanctions all, governs all, contains, upholds and informs all as the *Parama Puruṣa*, and at the same time executes all knowledge, will and formation as *prakṛti*. We see Him as "one Existence, Being gathered in Itself and Being displayed in all existences; as one Consciousness concentrated in the unity of its existence, extended in universal Nature and many-centred in innumerable beings; one Force static in its repose of self-gathered consciousness and dynamic in its activity of extended consciousness; one Delight blissfully aware of its featureless infinity and blissfully aware of all feature and force and forms as Itself; one creative Knowledge and governing Will, supramental, originative and determinative of all minds, lives and bodies; one Mind containing all mental beings and constituting all their mental activities; one Life active in all living beings and generative of their vital activities; one substance constituting all forms and objects as the visible and sensible mould in which mind and life manifest and act just as one pure existence is that ether in which all Consciousness, Force and Delight exist unified and find themselves variously. For these are the seven principles of the mani-

fest being of Sachchidananda.”¹ It is only the integral knowledge that can make us know and identify ourselves both statically and dynamically with all these multiple ways of being, *bhāvas*, of the Divine.

This integral knowledge is, according to Sri Aurobindo, the supramental gnosis, which unites in itself not only the knowledge of the timeless and featureless Absolute and the knowledge of its manifestation in Time and Space, but also includes a full and perfect knowledge of the basic principles and processes of that manifestation. It is at once the plenary self-vision and the world-vision of the Divine; and since it is a knowledge by identity—as all true spiritual knowledge must needs be—it gives us a dynamic union with the Divine and with all existence. This integral knowledge arms us with the supreme Will and Force of the Divine, not only for our release from ignorance and suffering, but for the transformation of our whole nature into the divine Nature. All other spiritual knowledge, if practised with a sustained sincerity, can lead to the liberation of the soul from the lower nature, but cannot transform that nature. It is only the supramental knowledge, the knowledge of the creative Truth-Consciousness, that can radically transform and divinise it. It liberates the soul, and it liberates the nature, and, by leading this double liberation into the infinite perfection of the Divine, bestows upon man the highest, the widest and the most harmonious

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

fulfilment of his whole being. It makes him live in the infinite Truth-Consciousness of the *Parama Puruṣa* and yet work in the world as an unfettered instrument of His Light and Force and Bliss.

THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

The above consideration will have made it abundantly clear that in the Integral Yoga the object of knowledge is the Divine Himself, the supreme Being, the *Puruṣotama* or the *catuṣpāda brahman*, and not only the *akṣara* or the *avyakta*, or the personal God of certain religions. We aspire to realise the sole and sovereign Reality that is at once transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic, timeless and self-deployed in Time, One and self-figured as many, as described by the Upanishad:

“He, the Divine, the formless Spirit, even He is the outward and the inward and He the Unborn; He is beyond life, beyond mind, luminous, Supreme beyond the Immutable.

“Life and mind and the senses are born from Him and the sky, and the wind, and light, and the waters and earth upholding all that is.”¹

The utmost transcendence, the most comprehensive universality, and the all-directing individuality of the

¹ Mundaka Upanishad.

Divine Presence in the hearts of beings, are all summed up in the *Paramātmān* or *Para Puruṣa* whom we seek and adore with the integrality of our being. He delivers us from the darkness of the Ignorance, lifts us into the infinite plenitude of His Truth-Consciousness, and, transforming us into His own divinity, fulfils the deepest aspiration of our whole being. He is our Master and Lover and Friend and Helper and Guide, who holds us in His embrace of beatific Love even when He uses us as manifesting channels of His supernal glory upon earth. He unites us with Himself in the closest union of rapt ecstasy in which we become completely identified with Him in all the ways of His being, and yet lets us keep up a certain unimaginable, mysterious difference-in-identity which permits of the sweetest relations of a termless, fathomless, unutterable love. He is at once the Lord of our being and the Architect of our becoming.

This is the knowledge at which we aim in the Integral Yoga—a knowledge which not only purifies and illumines and liberates, but transfigures and fulfils our whole being, and accomplishes the object of our soul's birth into the material world.

In the Integral Yoga the sacrifice of knowledge (*jñāna-yajña*) mounts from experience to experience, from plane to plane of the spiritual consciousness, passing now through the thrilled love and light of the psychic being, now through the calm and silence of the Self, and now through the stupendous surge and heave of the universal dynamism; arrested by nothing, attached to

no realisation, however exalting or alluring, however reposeful or transporting, but piercing all veils, shattering all obstacles and triumphing over all oppositions and resistances, it mounts with an ever-increasing intensity of aspiration towards what the Rigveda describes as "Vishnu's step supreme", or as :

"A Permanent, a Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun unyokes His horses. The ten hundreds (of His rays) come together...That One."

An unfathomable love is the glowing heart of this integral knowledge, a fiery rapture its inexhaustible life-force, and a tireless, manifestational work of the Divine its objective expression in the material world.

The object of knowledge in the Integral Yoga is a double achievement: a constant and integral union with the *Para Puruṣa* on all the planes of consciousness, and, as a dynamic result of that union, a perfect fulfilment of His Will to self-revelation in matter.

CHAPTER XXV

THE INTEGRAL LIBERATION

PART I

No ideal produces in the majority of spiritual seekers so great a thrill, such an inspiring sense of exaltation as the ideal of liberation. All rigour of self-discipline, all stress of a sustained, high-uplifting endeavour, and even all harsh austerities seem little enough price for the priceless state of spiritual freedom, if they can but contribute to its attainment. Difficulties are resolutely met and dangers courageously braved by those who are bent upon realising the essential freedom of their soul. What appears even as self-mortification or an extreme self-denial to others, may be, to a spiritual aspirant, a means of awakening his soul's fire, and a step towards the mastery of his lower nature. He does not count the cost when he embarks upon self-discovery. If he fails to achieve his object in his present life, unwearied and undejected, he looks forward to pursuing his quest in lives to follow; for, he knows that the bonds of aeons cannot be cut asunder with the same rapidity and ease with which Alexander the Great cut the Gordian knot. A relentless fight with his lower self, renewed from hour to hour, sustained through long years of unrelaxed vigilance and unremitting

labour, and supported and fortified by the divine Grace, can alone lead him to liberation.

But what is liberation? The average man knows little about it, and has no definite desire for it; for, a desire for liberation presupposes an agonised awareness of one's own bondage. The born slave does not feel the pangs of his slavery—he is content with it. Rather, if he is suddenly set free, he is sure to find his freedom unbearable, like the old prisoner who, on being released, wanted to be sent back into the prison where he had spent forty long years of his life without a break. We know our ordinary life of desires and passions, struggles and sufferings, pleasures and pains, and cannot think of an existence completely devoid of these conflicting elements. What will remain of life, we wonder, if desires and passions are extinguished for ever, and the dramatic dualities of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, success and failure are done away with? Would it not be something savourless, insipid, inert, and drained of all sap and substance? If desires do not drive us into action, if passions do not toss and heave our being, if envy and jealousy do not rankle in our hearts, if the heady wine of ambition is snatched away from our lips, life would, indeed, be a dreary affair for most of us. We have not only become habituated to slavery, we are not even conscious that it is slavery. We are not aware that our vaunted freedom—freedom of will and freedom of action—is a deplorable delusion; we do not know that it is always the goad of a desire or the lash of a passion

that determines our choice and dictates our action. Even what we regard as a reasoned or rational choice is, in the last analysis, found to have been determined by a subtle, hidden desire. We are bound in our thoughts, involved in our emotions, torn by our desires, glued to our sensations, and caged in our body. It is a manifold and consolidated servitude that is our common lot in the material world. "The perception of the ignorance of our assumption of freedom while one is all the time in the meshes of this lower nature, is the view-point at which the Gitâ arrives and it is in contradiction to this ignorant claim that it affirms the complete subjection of the ego-soul on this plane to the gunas. 'While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of Nature,' it says 'he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his "I" which is doing them.' "¹

To awake to the agony of this servitude, and to be conscious that we are yoked to the leaden rule of our lower nature, is the first step towards our soul's freedom. But this perception or awareness comes only when our real being, our psychic personality, awakes to its inherent liberty. In proportion as it awakes, we begin to feel with a growing poignancy how cramped and constricted we live in the rigid mould made for us by Nature. There is no freedom in this total subjection. For our very existence we are dependent upon the world. If the contacts of the world do not stir our senses, we do not feel our

¹ *Essays on the Gitâ* by Sri Aurobindo.

existence—we faint or fall asleep; for our life is nothing but a series of sensations, and most of our thoughts and feelings are but various responses of our cognitive, reflective and affective personality to the primary reactions of our senses. It is a pathetic fact that for our pleasure and happiness we are almost wholly at the mercy of the touches of the world. If a man gives me something, I feel pleased; but if he fails to give me what I expected from him, I feel displeased or disappointed—my peace, if I had any, is disturbed. If I am honoured or praised, I feel very happy, and am gentle and grateful to those who praise or honour me; but if I am criticised or ridiculed, all my gentleness vanishes in a moment and the unreclaimed savagery of my nature betrays itself. My sense of justice and equality, my kindness and sympathy for others, my courtesy and amiability, all are contingent upon factors over which I have no control. It is circumstances that determine the trend of my nature, the direction of my thoughts and the form and quality of my action. If I muster courage enough to revolt and react against circumstances, I find to my bewilderment that I am swept by forces within me which defy all control. I become a sport of them. I painfully realise my inner slavery even while I struggle to assert my outer freedom. If we would but pause to consider the abject slavery in which we live! We feel secure in our happiness when everything goes well with us—when we have health and wealth and fame and honour, and everything else that we normally covet; but, all of a

sudden, something may surge up from the subsoil of our being, and we are overwhelmed with a sense of despair or frustration, and a dark cloud settles upon our being. The sunshine and laughter are suddenly eclipsed by lamentation and gloom. Or, even when we are at the height of our powers, some unforeseen calamity may strike us down and make havoc of our life and its achievements. A mere turn of events, a casual word or gesture from somebody, a sudden eruption from the deep wells of memory, a passing physical ailment or affliction, and our happiness is engulfed in misery. A smile from a person we love and adore sends us into raptures, and a frown or a frigid look of indifference casts us into the pit of despair. It is the world that makes us smile or weep, rejoice or repine. It is the world's baubles that we run madly after, delighted, if we snatch them for a moment, miserable if they elude our grasp. We are beside ourselves when we are attacked by grief or anger, lust or greed, and we hardly suspect that we are moved by forces which are in no way native to our essential being. It is only when our soul awakens within us that we begin to feel the agony of our bondage and realise our utter helplessness in the hands of the universal forces of ignorance. A ray of light seems then to glint in the darkness, a gentle breath of hope seems to steal into our hearts, and an intuition of something within us which is immortally free, pure and blissful, springs up into our consciousness. That is a fateful experience which lights up the secret sense of our fettered wanderings in the

darkness, and makes us press forward towards liberation. Hypnotised bond-slaves of Nature, we awake at long last to our soul's innate freedom.

When we thus awake, we are seized with a consuming hunger for the Infinite. We chafe at the fetters which bind us, and dash against the barriers that impede our progress. The contrast between the luminous self-existence we perceive within us and the ignorant, shackled life we lead without, becomes increasingly painful and turns us into spiritual revolutionaries. We yearn to break all chains, to tread upon all crippling conditions, to transcend all limitations and—be free. We yearn to “breathe infinity, to soar in eternity,...escape from Time and Space.” The fiery intensity of this yearning has been movingly expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his poem, “The Vedantin's Prayer”:

Spirit Supreme

Who musest in the silence of the heart,
Eternal gleam,

Thou only art!

Ah, wherefore with this darkness am I veiled,
My sunlit part

By clouds assailed?

Why am I thus disfigured by desire,
Distracted, haled,

Scorched by the fire
Of fitful passions, from Thy peace out-thrust
Into the gyre

Of every gust?
Betrayed to grief, o'ertaken with dismay,
Surprised by lust?

Let not my grey
Blood-clotted past repel Thy sovereign ruth,
Nor even delay,

O lonely Truth!
Nor let the specious gods who ape Thee still
Deceive my youth.

These clamours still;
For I would hear the eternal voice and know
The eternal Will.

This brilliant show
Cumbering the threshold of eternity
Dispel,—bestow

The undimmed eye,
The heart grown young and clear. Rebuke,
O Lord,

These hopes that cry

So deafeningly,
Remove my sullied centuries, restore
My purity.

O hidden door
Of knowledge, open ! Strength, fulfil thyself !
Love, outpour !¹

According to the Gitâ, there are four causes of our bondage: ego, desire, the dualities, and attachment to the three *gunas*, (*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*) of the lower Nature. But it can be said that the principal cause is the ego, and that emancipation from the ego is true liberation. It is the ego that makes us identify ourselves with the perishable objects of the world and undergo the fate of their mutations. It makes us identify ourselves with our mind, life and body, which have only an instrumental value. To get beyond the ego, to identify oneself with no finite form, physical, vital or mental, to live in the limitless consciousness of the Self or Spirit, is the essence of liberation.

The liberated state is a state of absolute freedom and equality. It is a sovereign independence of the world and its touches. Neither sensations nor emotions nor thoughts can impinge upon the stirless silence of the soul's unconditioned self-existence. Liberated, we live in the inalienable peace and purity, light and joy, power

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo Vol I.*

and plenitude of our spiritual being. The world's din cannot raise a single ripple in that fathomless peace and silence, it remains impregnable; the world's pleasures and sufferings cannot trouble that serene and limpid joy, it abides unassailable; the world's darkness cannot cast any shadow over that self-existent Light. We are poised high above all disturbing sense of honour and dishonour, gain and loss, success and failure, victory and defeat. Disease and decrepitude cannot affect us, and even death loses all its reality for us; for, our boundless spiritual consciousness knows no infirmity, no sleep, no cessation. Nature's dualities may still persist in our phenomenal parts, the habitual reactions may continue by their past momentum, calamities may come, and even death, but nothing can shake our inner poise—we stand imperturbable in the luminous calm of our soul, independent of the whole world, like the limitless sky watching unmoved the stormy tumult of the sea below. Liberated, we have gone beyond the slavery of hunger and thirst, heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, life and death. We live in our soul, in its native light and peace and bliss, and no longer in the succession of the moments of Time or the illusory divisions of Space. Our consciousness remains untouched by the turmoil of the *gunas*, and our freedom inviolable. We are plunged in the termless bliss and blessedness of our infinite and immortal existence.

The above description may be said to represent the essence of liberation as it is understood by most schools

of spiritual discipline. It is a transcendence of the ego and the turbid working of the lower nature, and a tranquil poise in the purity and freedom of the Self. But this transcendence, if it is attained by a flight or defensive self-withdrawal, does not lead to a complete mastery and transformation of the lower nature. It is true that the liberated man is not affected by the turmoil of his lower nature, but the turmoil persists, in however diminished a form, and he endures it in the hope that it will end with the end of his material life. The imperfections of the nature and the evils of life are suffered with a calm fortitude as indispensable elements of human existence, and a release from the wheel of *karma* and the painful process of birth and death is awaited with an almost religious eagerness. This is the general conception of *mukti*, *kaivalaya* or *nirvāṇa*.¹ In the ideal of the *jīvanmukta*, there is an extension of the concept of liberation—the liberated man need not, perhaps should not, abstain from all action, or long for an escape from the labour of life; he should preserve his spiritual poise even in the midst of all life's activities, and, by personal example and influence, help the world on its onward march. The nature of the *jīvanmukta* is irradiated with the light of his liberated soul; there is greater purity and freedom and flexibility in his natural instruments than in those of the *sādhakas* who seek only personal salvation and an escape

¹ The traditional orthodox conception, much discounted today, is that *Mukti* or *Nirvāṇa* can be attained only after death.

from the ills of life. But even a *jīvanmukta* cannot be said to possess a transformed nature. He enjoys perfect freedom in his soul, and a reflected and relative freedom in his nature. His soul is liberated, his inner consciousness is liberated, but not his nature, which still labours in bondage, though, of course, it is a modified bondage, greatly relieved of much of its normal rigour. There is a considerable development of the *sattwa guṇa* in his nature, and its effective predominance over the other *guṇas*, but there is no radical conversion of the *guṇas* themselves into their divine counterparts—*sattwa* into *jyotiḥ*, *rajas* into *tejas* or *tapas*, and *tamas* into *śānti*. The ideal of the *jīvanmukta* is, therefore, even at its best, an ideal of a semi-liberation of the human being—liberation in the soul or the Self, but a modified and attenuated bondage in the parts of nature. The ancient ideal of the liberation and transformation of nature has long been lost sight of in the spiritual culture of humanity.

There is another thing to consider in this connection. There is always the possibility of one's being liberated into the absolute of what one's inmost being ardently aspires for with a resolute will; for the Absolute is the beginning and the end of our soul's journey. If I aspire only for peace, I can be liberated into an absolute of peace. I can, likewise, be liberated into an absolute of silence, or an absolute of bliss, if I aspire for them. Though there is no basic difference, there is a substantial difference of emphasis between the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddhists and the *mokṣa* of the Jainas, the *kaivalya* of the

Sāṅkhyas and the *mukti* of the *Vedāntins*. The Buddha speaks of the *nirvāṇa* or self-extinction in the infinite Void; the *Gitā* of *nirvāṇa* in the Brahman, *Brahmanirvāṇa*; and Jainism of *nirvāṇa* in the *citswarūpa* of the soul. The *sādhaka*, if he is sincere, is sure to end by realising that which his consciousness has fixed upon as the supreme goal from the beginning of his *sādhana*. The crown of attainment lies casketed in the seed of aspiration.

But by liberation Sri Aurobindo means liberation into the Divine, the Supreme Being, the Omnipresent Reality. In the Integral Yoga, we do not aspire exclusively for peace or silence or power or bliss, though they do come as auxiliary and contributory experiences, but solely for the Divine. Transcending the limitations of Nature, we long to reach no "infinite inane" (*śūnyam*), but the eternal Master and Lover of our being. We take all the experiences that come our way, but proceed, undeflected and firm, towards the single goal of our endeavour—the Divine. Liberation means for us, then, liberation into the Supreme *Puruṣa*.

Again, by liberation Sri Aurobindo means liberation both of the soul of man and of his nature. This conception of a double liberation has not been familiar to spiritual seekers for many a long century. The endeavour to purify human nature, so that it may not stand in the way of the soul's liberation, is universally regarded as an indispensable discipline; but it is hardly ever thought possible that even this nature of the three *guṇas* can be liberated from its lower poise and working, and

transmuted into the divine Nature. But this double liberation is the very base of the supramental manifestation as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The Integral Yoga really begins where the other yogas usually end.

We shall now pass in brief review the nature and potentiality of this double or integral liberation.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE INTEGRAL LIBERATION

PART II

"A DIVINE unity of supreme Spirit and its supreme nature is the integral liberation."¹ In these words Sri Aurobindo indicates the essence of the liberation we aim at in the Integral Yoga. It is not only liberation from the lower nature of the three *guṇas* into the peace and silence of the immutable Self that we seek, but liberation in the Divine, the supreme Spirit; and it cannot be fully achieved so long as our nature is not also liberated from its inferior modes into the luminous Consciousness-Force of the Supernature, *parā prakṛti*. For, in the Divine there is an eternal harmony between Light and Force, silence and action, status and dynamis; and unless our nature's movements are transformed and attuned to the rhythms of the Supernature, our liberation will remain only partial—liberation only in the divine *cit* (consciousness) and not in His *tapas* (Force), only in His silence and not in His cosmic action. But an initial liberation of the *puruṣa* is indispensable for the work of transformation and perfection; for, this work depends upon the fullness of

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

the sâdhaka's self-surrender to the Divine Mother, and the fullness or integrality of surrender is possible only when the sâdhaka detaches and knows himself as separate from the nature he surrenders. All offering implies previous possession of the thing offered, and possession argues some amount of control and transcendence. The initial liberation of the soul is, therefore, an important condition of the integral self-surrender. Most of the current spiritual disciplines stop at this initial liberation. When the soul can stand aloof from the whirl of Nature and unaffected by it; when it lives in an immortal infinity of consciousness—radiant, full of repose and tranquillity, and impervious to any trouble or disturbances; when it finds in itself an inexhaustible fount of peace and serenity and bliss, and has not to depend for them upon the fugitive touches of the world; when it is equal to all beings and neither attracted nor repelled by anything in the world; when it is free from the ego and does not identify itself with the mutable formations of its nature;—it can be said to be liberated. This is the initial liberation. The sâdhaka, in whom the soul-consciousness has been liberated, has then to promote the growth and ascent of his liberated consciousness towards the universality, transcendence and integrality of the divine Consciousness, and offer his nature into the hands of the divine Mother, so that She may transform and perfect it for Her work in the world. His ascent from one status of the Spirit to another, from knowledge to higher knowledge, from power to fuller power, from bliss to deeper bliss, will be his

further liberation into the universality and transcendence of the Divine. And the higher he ascends, the better can he unite his will with the Will of the Divine Mother for the liberation and transformation of his nature.

The main difficulty, which, however, proves after a certain time to be a great help and opportunity, is that the *sâdhaka* of the Integral Yoga is debarred by the very nature of his ideal to retreat into the inner quiescence of his being by a deliberate rejection or diminution of the works of his nature, as is done in most other yogas. He has to give battle to his enemies in the true *kṣatriya* spirit—challenge and face them when and where they are most alert and active. His dealings with them are guided by two very important truths of nature: first, that what binds by the agency of the ego and desire, becomes the most potent means of release in the conditions of desirelessness and unegoistic self-surrender; second, that most of the enemies of our nature are, in fact, our friends in disguise, and have only to be won over and converted, and not to be stamped out of existence. They have not to be repressed or throttled, but held up before the Mother's Light, and transmuted and converted into their divine counterparts. The very obstacles of the spiritual life are thus turned into so many aids by the spirit of self-consecration in the attitude of the *sâdhaka*. The active life of dedicated service, in which all the dynamic elements and energies of his being are given over into the hands of the Divine Mother, becomes at once a means of his liberation and transformation. The path

may be long—the transformation of every fibre and every faculty of our nature cannot certainly be done in a day—but each firm step taken in advance gives an increasing foretaste of freedom, and a spur and speed to our progress.

The liberation of nature as distinct from the liberation of the *puruṣa* essentially means liberation from the *dwandwas*, the dualities, and the working of the three *guṇas*. But the dualities and the mixed working of the three *guṇas* are not confined to our waking nature, they have their roots spreading down into the subconscious and inconscient layers of our being. A complete liberation of our nature from these basic impurities can be effected only by the process of a radical transformation, which we shall study in the next chapter. In the traditional yogas what is usually done is that the *sāttwic* quality of the nature is developed to a great extent, and whenever there is an uprush of *rajas*, *tamas* or the quality of inaction and inertia is resorted to; and preponderating *sattwa* with a modicum of *tamas* makes what is readily taken as a saintly nature. But in the Integral Yoga one does not seek to quell *rajas* by calling in the aid of *tamas* and taking refuge in a partial or complete inaction. One seeks, first, to transcend the *guṇas*, to be *triguṇātīta*, and then transform them. All the parts, faculties and functions of the nature are given free play, without any imposition of repressive inhibitions and taboos, so that whatever is obscure crooked or perverse in them and resistant to the soul's divine flowering may be detected

and offered up to the fire of the Mother's Force for a radical transmutation. No part is maimed or atrophied, for each is an indivisible portion of the whole organism, and essential to the fullness of its perfection. A complete freedom from the *dwandwas* or dualities cannot be achieved on the basis of an imperfect *sāttwic* equilibrium, for the three lower *guṇas* are so inextricably involved in each other that none of them can exist singly without the others' harassing or hampering its action. Even in the most developed *sāttwic* nature there is always the possibility of sporadic incursions of *rajas*, or slow, insidious penetrations of *tamas*—there can neither be a perfect immunity nor a perfect equilibrium. The *guṇas* are locked in a constant strife for mastery. It is a perception of this perpetual swing or unstable balancing of the struggling *guṇas* that generates the impatient ascetic tendency towards the eternal immobility of *mokṣa* or the soul's liberation through the renunciation of Nature herself. But "the strife of the *guṇas* is only a representation in the imperfection of the lower nature; what the three *guṇas* stand for are three essential powers of the Divine which are not merely existent in a perfect equilibrium of quietude, but unified in a perfect consensus of divine action. *Tamas* in the spiritual being becomes a divine calm, which is not an inertia and incapacity of action, but a perfect power, *śakti*, holding in itself all its capacity and capable of controlling and subjecting to the law of calm even the most stupendous and enormous activity; *rajas* becomes a self-effecting, initiating

sheer Will of the Spirit, which is not desire, endeavour, striving passion, but the same perfect power of being, *śakti*, capable of an infinite, imperturbable and blissful action. *Sattwa* becomes not the modified mental light, *prakāś*, but the self-existent light of the divine being, *jyoti*, which is the soul of the perfect power of being and illumines in their unity the divine quietude and the divine will of action. The ordinary liberation gets the still divine light in the divine quietude, but the integral perfection will aim at this greater triune unity.”¹

The philosophy underlying this aim and ideal of the triune unity and dynamic utilisation of the transformed *guṇas* is that we have a dual being, one essential and the other derivative and instrumental. The instrumental being is called in Indian philosophy *karana*. It has two aspects: inner and outer, *antahkaraṇa* and *bāhyakaraṇa*, subjective and objective. The word *karana* or instrument indicates that it has a purpose to serve. What is the purpose behind the creation of this instrumental being? What should man do with his nature of the three *guṇas*? Should he condemn his instrument to atrophy and futility? Or use it only to reduce it to immobility and have done with it for ever? Or should he employ it only to extricate his essential being from it, and prove by this release the utter senselessness of its creation? These are no solutions of the problem of its use, but a clumsy escape and evasion from it. The Upanishads declare that all that is there

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

above is also here below, and that all that is here is also there. This is a definite affirmation of the truth, the right use and utility, the teleological purpose of all that constitutes our essential and instrumental being. An instrument has been created not for the purpose of condemning and scrapping it, but for serving some definite end. It is fatuous to call a thing an instrument and deny its utility in the same breath. If our nature, subjective and objective, is an instrument, what is its destined use, and how best can it be served? Sri Aurobindo looks the problem squarely in the face, and asserts with the Vedic Rishis that the instrument has not only a use, but a divine use—it is created for the progressive expression or manifestation of the Divine. Evidently, then, a fettered instrument, fettered with its limited and defective qualities, cannot fulfil the purpose for which it is made. It has to be purified, transfigured and liberated into its divine principle. Its play of the lower qualities is a legacy of its inconscient origin, a result of its creation in the Ignorance; but the march of evolution shows that the instrument goes on refining itself and becoming more and more conscious and efficient as our essential being awakes to its inherent divinity and mastery. The liberation of our essential being is the most important condition of the liberation of our instrumental being, unless, of course, we choose to shuffle off the latter altogether and say to the Divine, “We renounce the instrument you have given us, because we find it intrinsically impure and imperfect, and we retire into our essential Self. We do not care what happens to

your Will and purpose in the world.” This exclusive tension towards personal salvation,¹ this intense, intolerant, passionate thirst for individual release by the rejection of nature, *mumukṣutwa*, we have to renounce, and renounce utterly, if we aspire to realise the integral liberation in the Divine, and fulfil His Will and purpose in the world. We have to become *bhogamokṣanirākāṅkṣī*, desirous neither of *bhoga* nor of *mokṣa*, but totally consecrated to the supreme Reality and His omnipotent Will. When our nature is liberated, there will be no longer any possibility of obscurity, neither in our soul nor in our phenomenal parts, from any cause whatever—our entire being will be in the Being of the Divine, and moved by it. Our liberated nature, transformed in its parts and energies, will attain its perfection when the supramental Will initiates and accomplishes all its movements. The distinction of birth and death will then disappear for ever in the termless bliss of immortality—immortality in the soul and immortality in the nature. Our union with the Supreme will be at once *sāyujya* and *sādharmya*, identity in being and a dynamic identity in nature—

“Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
Clasping for ever.”²

¹ “The desire of exclusive liberation is the last desire that the soul in its expanding knowledge has to abandon; the delusion that it is bound by birth is the last delusion that it has to destroy”. Sri Aurobindo

² *Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo*.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

PART I

WHAT IS TRANSFORMATION?

"SPIRITUAL experiences can fix themselves in the inner consciousness and alter it, transform it, if you like; one can realise the Divine everywhere, the Self in all and all in the Self, the universal *śakti* doing all things; one can feel merged in the cosmic Self or full of ecstatic *bhakti* or *ānanda*. But one may and usually does still go on in the outer parts of Nature thinking with the intellect or at best the intuitive mind, willing with a mental will, feeling joy and sorrow on the vital surface, undergoing physical afflictions and suffering from the struggle of life in the body with death and disease. The change then only will be that the inner self will watch all that without getting disturbed or bewildered, with a perfect equality, taking it as an inevitable part of Nature, inevitable at least so long as one does not withdraw to the Self out of Nature. That is not the transformation I envisage. It is quite another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another

constitution of the physical consciousness that must come in by the Supramental change.”¹

Very important words are these that throw a flood of light upon the capital distinction between the object of the Integral Yoga and the ideals and achievements of the other yogas. Sri Aurobindo says that the transformation of the inner consciousness, even if complete, is not the transformation aimed at in the Integral Yoga. “One can realise the Divine everywhere”—a realisation which is almost universally regarded as the summit experience of spiritual life—and yet remain untransformed in his nature. “One can realise the Self in all and all in the Self”; “one can realise the universal *śakti* doing all things”; “one can feel merged in the cosmic Self”, and yet, paradoxical as it may sound, none of these realisations, not even the sum-total of them, will constitute the transformation Sri Aurobindo holds up before us as the highest object of spiritual discipline.

What, then, is transformation? In the case of a saint or a sage, as we know, his central consciousness remains detached from the movements of his nature, whether they are delightful or painful; and he regards them as the inevitable consequences of his past action, *prāraṇḍha*. He is not troubled or disturbed by them in the depths of his being; he watches them with a perfect equality from the serene peace of his liberated state. But, however much we may have been accustomed to the sublimity of this

¹ *On Yoga*—II by Sri Aurobindo.

detached poise and the spiritual greatness of this standpoint, and whatever may be the weight of tradition in its favour, we cannot for ever shut our eyes to the fact that though there is freedom in the essential part of a saint's being, his active, phenomenal part remains more or less still shackled to the three *guṇas* and in the grip of the ignorant world-forces. There is equality in his soul, but inequality in his nature; light in his depths, but darkness or twilight on the active surface. Even if he conquers a portion of this darkness, the conquest is never complete and conclusive. He has to live and labour under conditions of what appears as an insurmountable difficulty. Certainly, this is not transformation in any sense of the word. It is only the liberation of the soul and an intermittent reflex action of that liberated state in the nature. It cannot satisfy the aspiration implanted in us for a radical conquest and perfection in life.

Transformation, as it is understood in the Integral Yoga, is not moral or spiritual purification; it is a radical and integral transmutation of human nature. It implies, as Sri Aurobindo says in categorical terms, "another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another constitution of the physical consciousness." It is not any moral perfection or yogic *siddhi*, as it is currently understood, any seerhood or sainthood, that is meant by transformation. It is not indefinitely prolonging one's youth and living an extraordinarily long life in perfect health and vigour, or possessing a *cinmaya* or transcendental body.

It is a change of consciousness and being, more radical and complete than what took place when "a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world." It is a victorious descent and manifestation of the Truth-Light (*ṛtamjyotiḥ*) in the consciousness and nature of man, and of the highest creative principle and power of knowledge marking a decisive advance in his evolution. It is true that a somewhat similar attempt was made by the Vedic Rishis, but it was confined to some parts of human nature, and undertaken on an individual, and not a collective scale. The Tāntrics also laboured towards some such objective, but with nothing better than very partial and precarious, though often spectacular, results. The Alchemists, at their very best, worked on these lines in Egypt and Chaldea, and later, with a less intensity of vision, in Greece and medieval Europe. They sought to turn the base metal of human nature into the Prima Materia from which it is derived; so that its original purity and power could be restored to it. But all these intrepid endeavours of man, which bear eloquent testimony to the fundamental demand of his being and nature, failed to achieve any enduring success for three important reasons: first, the spiritual vision behind the ideas was not deep and comprehensive enough to embrace the complex totality of human nature; second, the secret of transformation was sought for elsewhere than where it naturally belongs—the power that was employed for the work was not the supreme divine Power which alone can transmute, without coercing or crippling, the teeming elements and

energies of human nature; third, the time was not ripe for such a global collective endeavour, and the evolutionary march of man had not yet arrived at the stage from which the culminating saltus could be confidently taken. But today, in spite of the materialist's denial of Spirit and his scepticism about the reality of the spiritual forces, there is a growing, an insistent, though a more or less imprecise, aspiration for a radical change, a perfect integration, and a complete and integral fulfilment of human life and nature. There is a fumbling attempt, now in one direction, now in another, sometimes—as in some latest trends of modern psychology and sociology—touching even the outer rim of the delivering solution, but always falling far short on account of a lack of the right knowledge and the right dynamic will to such a thorough self-transfiguration, which would necessarily entail a total renunciation of most of what constitutes our present ignorant human personality and its habitual way of living. But the ideal that is defining itself more and more clearly in the consciousness of man, and the thought and aspiration that are becoming increasingly articulate and insistent cannot be stifled or eclipsed for ever—they are sure to seek and find their ultimate fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo's originality in the spiritual field lies in his focussing in himself this deepest and highest aspiration of humanity, and discovering the secret of its perfect fulfilment. He asserts—and his assertion breathes hope and confidence into the drooping heart of the modern man—that an integral transformation of human nature and

life will be the ultimate redemption and perfection of man, the fallen Adam. His ascent will be as high and glorious as his fall has been painful and precipitous. An illumination in the depths of his being with a twilight in the parts of his nature will not satisfy him any longer. His inmost aspiration, obscure even to his outer mind today, is for an integral fulfilment in life, for the possession of a divine consciousness, freely expressing itself in a divine body. It is for the definitive conquest of all that has opposed his self-transcendence—his weaknesses, his incapacities, his impurities, the easy susceptibility of his body to disease and decrepitude and death—that he seems to aspire. The inertia of his body, the obscure desires and passions of his vital (*prāṇa*), the dim, vagrant thoughts and fancies of his mind he must, therefore, completely transform and convert, if he would use his instrumental being to any divinely creative end. His transformed consciousness must have a fully transformed instrument for its perfect self-expression in the world.

We have spoken of the descent of a new Light of consciousness and a new Force as the indispensable agents of this stupendous work of transformation. It must be clearly understood that without this supreme Light and this supreme Force the work can never be accomplished. The highest dynamic Force of Spirit, the native Light and Law of Truth must come down and effectuate this long and complex work, which will be the crowning achievement of human evolution. *Vijñāna śakti* or the supra-mental Force, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, is the supreme

creative Force of the Divine; and it is only this Force with its Truth-Light that can new-create what it has created, new-mould what has gone out of shape, reconcile the highest status in knowledge with the fullest, unfettered play of Nature's dynamis, and convert the ignorance, the evil, the suffering, the thousand kinks and crookednesses, the jangling discords of human nature into the unity and harmony and light and bliss of the supramental nature. It is this supreme Force alone that can send its shafts of light into the caves of the *panis*¹, the obscure subterranean regions of our being, and release from there the penned cows, *gāvaḥ*, the radiances of the submerged Spirit, and turn all darkness into light, all inertia into conscious electric energies, all incapacity into divine strength, and all inconscience into plenary consciousness.

The transformed human nature will be a temple housing the four supreme aspects of the divine Mother, *Ādyā Śakti*: *Maheśwari*, *Mahākālī*, *Mahālakṣmī* and *Mahā-saraswatī*. *Maheśwari* will occupy its parts of knowledge, widening and illumining them with Her all-revealing Light; *Mahākālī* will govern and guide its dynamic parts of will and power and creative impulsion, and use them for Her divine ends, imparting to knowledge "a conquering might" and to beauty and harmony "a high and mounting movement"; *Mahālakṣmī* will turn its parts of emotion

¹ The Panis, according to the Veda, are the lords of the sense-consciousness who steal from us the brilliant herds (rays) of the sun and pen them up in the caverns of the subconscious and the dense hill (*adri*) of Matter.

and aesthesis into a poem of love and delight, overflowing them with Her sweetness and grace and charm and tenderness, and upholding them with an unassailable creative harmony; and *Mahāsaraswatī* will impart to its active physical parts the right rhythm and the right spirit and technique of perfection in work, informing them with “the intimate and precise knowledge, the subtlety and patience, the accuracy of intuitive mind and conscious hand and discerning eye of the perfect worker.”¹ This free and harmonious working of the four supreme aspects and powers of the Divine Mother in the transformed human nature will imply in its practical results a combined and perfectly coordinated action of the fourfold type of human temperament—*Brāhman*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sūdra*—in a single, integrated individual. It will be, in fact, a sublimation, transfiguration, and integration of the whole being of man with all its powers and faculties in full and unrestricted divine play. It will be a spontaneous, unified action of the *caturvyūha* of the ancient Vaishnavic tradition—a Power for knowledge, a Power for strength, a Power for mutuality and active and productive relation and interchange, and a Power for works and labour and service. A divine fullness and glory flowing freely out of the integral being of man including even his body, is the state of transformation aimed at by the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. It is a sovereign possession of soul and nature in the illimitable ecstasy of the divine union.

¹ *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

PART II

THE RATIONALE OF TRANSFORMATION

WE have already learnt that an integral and dynamic union with the Divine is the goal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. What does this integral union mean? It means that we have to be united with the Divine in all the states, poises and modes of His being and our being. The Divine is not only the Transcendent Absolute; He is not only the infinite, impassive Impersonal; He is all that exists, here as well as there above. He is both Spirit and Nature, Time and the Timeless, Space and the Spaceless, all these names and forms that we see and those that we do not see, as well as the eternal Formless and Nameless. To be united with Him in an undeviating intimacy and identity in all the aspects and attributes of His infinitely one and multiple being, is integral union. We have to be one with Him in His divine Self and also in His divine Nature, *parāprkṛti*; in His omnipresent being and also in His universal becoming. How can this be done except by an integral transformation of our being? By the liberation of our soul we can unite with Him in His Self or

Spirit; we can withdraw our consciousness from our nature and its working, and absorb it either in the silent Immut-able, or the ecstatic Lover in the depth of our heart; but unless our nature is also liberated and transformed and universalised, we cannot unite with the Divine in His Supernature. We have either to slough off this nature altogether—and that is not possible before death, and problematical even after it—or consent to put up with its impurities and imperfections as an irremediable evil. It is this imperative necessity of an integral union with the Divine, of making Him the Master not only of our being, but also of our becoming, not only of our soul, but also of our nature, that imposes the long labour of transformation. Transformation will enable us to live in the Divine not only in the absorbed ecstasy of trance, but at all times, in all that we think and feel and do, and in all the parts and elements of our being. It will enable us to live the Life Divine on earth—physically, vitally, mentally and spiritually.

If the supramental transformation be not achieved, the goal of spiritual life would remain what it has always been—liberation of a few exceptional individuals into some kind of transcendent peace or bliss; and the world would continue in its present darkness, ignorance and suffering. No ethical pottering or patch-work, no dim-eyed moral rearmament or any such superficial tinkering with the nature of man, can ever effect a radical transmutation of the entrenched, ancestral animality of human life. For, ethics does not reach the roots that thrive in the gloomy

subsoil of our being; it chisels and polishes only the surface. But man being potentially divine, not only in his inmost self, but also in his nature—for his nature is derived from the Supernature—a complete transformation, that is to say, a complete divinisation, of his integral being is the ultimate destiny of his earthly existence. A perfect radiation of the supreme divine Light, *ṛtamjyotiḥ* is the inalienable birth-right of his life.¹

If we study the course of evolution, we find that it has two striking features, invariably marking its progress from stage to stage—transcendence and metamorphosis. The consciousness of the being that is released more and more from the darkness of Matter goes on transcending itself, and its nature follows in the wake of its progressive transcendence. Transcendence seems, indeed, to be the cardinal principle of evolution,—transcendence not only in the consciousness of the being, but also in its nature. The difference between the consciousness of the worm—for, it, too, has a consciousness, though it is not mental—and that of the dog or the horse is an indisputable evidence of the law of transcendence, and we perceive an equal difference in their respective natures. The difference between the consciousness of man and that of the animal is a still more striking difference, and equally striking is the difference between their respective natures. This proves that evolution is nothing but a continuous series of

¹ "An integral transformation is the integral aim of the Being in Nature; this is the inherent sense of her universal urge of self-transcendence."—*The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

self-transcendence of the being. We may, therefore, legitimately ask: "Will this self-transcendence stop at the mind of man and proceed no farther? Or will it henceforth be only a transcendence of consciousness and not of nature? Are the twilight of the human mind and its inherent weaknesses and incapacities the insuperable limit beyond which evolution cannot advance?"

Evolution presupposes involution. From this truth we can reasonably deduce that what is involved must fully evolve. What is it, then, that is involved here in Matter? According to ancient Indian philosophy, it is the Supreme Being, *saccidānanda*, that is involved in Matter, and evolution is nothing but a progressive emergence of the involved *saccidānanda*. The highest that has evolved up to now is the mind of man, a mind, be it noted, which is enfolded in ignorance, and struggles for, but is not in possession of, knowledge. Evidently, therefore, this cannot be the term of evolution. There is scope for a further series of transcendence, a further widening and heightening of the consciousness, till it reaches the infinite Supermind, the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the creative Consciousness of *saccidānanda*. This consummating transcendence will inevitably be followed by a corresponding supramental metamorphosis or transformation of nature. Even the most confirmed sceptic will admit that the present evolution of human nature does not exhaust all its possibilities—it has a divine Face to unveil, the shining contours of the Supernature.

There is yet another point to consider in this connection. According to Sri Aurobindo—and it is the view implicit in the Vedas and the Upanishads—there are seven basic principles sustaining the seven principal worlds: *bhuḥ*, *bhuvah*, *swah*, *mahas*, *janah*, *tapas* and *satya*. In the material world, the *sat* of the *satya* world has become *annam* or Matter, *cit* of the world of *tapas* has become Life, and *mahas* has become Mind. Matter, which is derived from *sat* or the luminous substance of the transcendent existence, is not something intrinsically inert and obscure, but has become so on account of its phenomenal evolution from the utter darkness of the Inconscience. Similarly, Life is not something intrinsically turbid and impure, but has so become on account of the same phenomenal cause. Mind, too, whatever its present deficiencies, its ignorance and limitations, has derived from the *mahas* or the infinite Truth-Conscious Supermind. These instruments of the Spirit are not, therefore, condemned to function for ever on an irretrievable basis of division, darkness and discord, but are meant to recover their essential unity and identity with their divine counterparts and be converted into their substance, force and light. Matter or *annam* can be converted into the luminous, immortal substance of *sat*, Life or *prāṇa* into the effulgent force of *cit-tapas*, and Mind into the boundless glory of the Supermind or *vijñāna*. Their eventual transformation is foreshadowed in the very trend of their evolution, and seems to be the secret sense of their creation.

THE CONDITIONS OF TRANSFORMATION

The first condition of transformation is an intense, constant and definite aspiration for it. Unless one has as strong, as intense an aspiration for it as one has for personal salvation or divine realisation, in the traditional yogas, it cannot be achieved. There must be a clear perception in the aspiration that transformation is an indispensable means of the integral divine union, and that without it the union can never be constant and integral. Those who long only for the peace and silence of the *akṣara* (the Immutable), or self-extinction in the Ineffable, or the transporting raptures of the embrace of the eternal Lover in the adytum of their heart, do not need to transform their nature; they are content if their nature is purified and quieted enough to let them pass beyond itself in moments of absorbed concentration. It is only the seekers of the integral union, those who are resolved to turn their whole human consciousness into the divine consciousness, and their whole human life into the divine life, that aspire for transformation.

The second condition is an integral surrender to the Divine *śakti*, the Mother. I have dwelt at length on this subject in some of the previous chapters, particularly in chapter VII, and shall, therefore, pass it by here with just an emphatic assertion of its indispensability. It is sheer folly to think of effecting the supramental transformation of one's nature by one's own mental strength and power.

The third condition is the descent of the supramental consciousness into the nature of the aspirant. "The ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sâdhanâ."¹ As I have already said, the work of transformation, which is a radical and integral operation, is beyond the capacity of any spiritual consciousness, short of the supramental. A mere ascent to the Supermind will not transform our nature; the all-powerful Light-Force of the Supermind must come down and penetrate as far down as the subconscious and inconscient² levels of our manifold being, illumine their darkness, and make them plastic and responsive to its transmuting action. This descent of the supramental consciousness is the most distinctive feature of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, and bears in itself all the incalculable possibilities of the Life Divine in humanity.

The fourth condition, which is also a characteristic feature of the Integral Yoga, is that it is essential for every part of our being to consent and offer itself with a good grace to the work of transformation. It is not enough that the heart or the most enlightened part of the mind aspires for the transformation, or that the

¹ *On Yoga, Part II* by Sri Aurobindo.

² "Even the inconscient and subconscious have to become conscient in us, susceptible to the higher light, no longer obstructive to the fulfilling action of the Conscious-Force, but more and more a mould and lower basis of the Spirit." —*The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

awakened soul imposes its imperial will upon the other parts of the being and constrains them to accept the discipline. That can be done in the beginning of the *sâdhanâ*, when the psychic pressure and influence is a decisive, purifying factor, and the toddling mental being has not learnt to walk erect and look up to the high heavens. A certain psychic push and pressure are indispensable at the earlier stages of the *sâdhanâ* in order to awaken the less evolved parts to their own potentiality and destiny. But for the descent of the supramental Truth-Light and the work of the integral transformation, the consent and cooperation of every part are absolutely necessary. Each part of the composite being must desire the Divine, and a constant union and communion with Him; each part must choose the supreme Light and give itself without reserve to its transforming Force. This necessity of consent and collaboration rests upon the profound truth that each part of our being is an autonomous whole, having a centralised consciousness in it, which is called in Indian philosophy the *puruṣa*, and that all parts together constitute the organic totality of our complex being. For example, we have the physical *puruṣa*, *annamaya puruṣa*, in our physical organism; the vital or *prāṇamaya puruṣa*; the mental or *manomaya puruṣa*, and the psychic or *caitya puruṣa*. All these Purushas, which are projections of the central *puruṣa* or *jīvātman*, are free to accept or reject transformation. If they all aspire for the Divine and surrender to His supramental *śakti*, then only will that *śakti* descend

and act in the integral being. The supramental change is impossible of achievement with any part of our being remaining rebellious or unresponsive, or coerced into some kind of resigned or resentful submission. Even the body with its own consciousness must seek the Divine—His Light and Peace and Harmony and Bliss—in all its cells and nerves and currents of energy, and the Divine's effective, immortalising Presence in its transformed substance. A sincere call,¹ a free choice, a joyous consent², and an unstinted self-offering on the part of each member of our being are essential for the great change aimed at by the Integral Yoga. The world is built on the principle of freedom for each individual, each element, each atom; and if there is bondage and subjection, it is self-imposed, an inevitable consequence of a free choice. Liberation and transformation are also matters of free choice, and cannot be imposed upon unwilling members.

¹ The vital may understand, but that is not enough; it must wholeheartedly call for the peace and transformation."—*On Yoga—II* by Sri Aurobindo.

² "...The participation and consent of the Purusha to the transition is not sufficient, there must be also the consent and participation of the Prakriti. It is not only the central thought and will that have to acquiesce, but all the parts of our being must assent and surrender to the law of the spiritual Truth; all have to learn to obey the government of the conscious Divine Power in the members." —*The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

"...At each step of the transition the assent of the Purusha is needed and there must be too the consent of each part of the nature to the action of the higher power for its change." *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

PART III

THE THREE STEPS OF TRANSFORMATION

THE essential function of the soul is to offer all things to the Divine for transformation, for it has come down into mortal birth for the only purpose of accomplishing a perfect manifestation of the Divine in its phenomenal becoming. But for the soul or the psychic, our mind, life and body would have always remained in an unrelieved darkness and gone on chasing after the fleeting objects of the world, and involving themselves more and more in futile struggles and endless suffering.

The psychic awakes as it evolves in Nature, and tries to influence its instrumental being at first from behind the veil and afterwards more and more overtly. Itself all love and devotion for the Divine, it infects the mind, life and body with its own passion and purity and seeks to turn them Godwards and towards the fulfilment of the very reason of their existence. The potential lord and master of its nature, it emerges from its secret crypt, and, little by little, begins to influence, purify, control and convert mind, life and body till, psychically

transformed, they become fit instruments of its self-expression in the world.

The psychic transformation is, therefore, the first step in the long and uphill labour of transformation undertaken by the followers of the Integral Yoga. The whole nature has first to be psychicised, that is to say, tuned to the psychic key, suffused with the psychic love and devotion for the Divine, and lit up with the psychic purity. Surrender and self-consecration in work, surrender and a passionate self-giving in feelings and emotions, surrender and a loving concentration in thought and reflection, and an intense and constant aspiration for an integral and dynamic union with the Divine in all the members of the being—this is the first sure indication of a full and direct psychic action on the nature. The native impulse in the psychic is to give all it possesses to the Divine. As it emerges from its occult depths, it spreads its influence upon the members of its phenomenal nature, and tries to turn them towards the Divine. It may try at first to convert the intellect and the “larger mind of insight and intuitional intelligence”, but the thinking mind, as soon as it undergoes a spiritual influence, seems almost always to betray a tendency to drift towards the abstract, the Impersonal, the Immutable. A better and more dynamically effective approach is through the heart. The feelings and emotions of the heart are nearer to the seat of the psychic, and it can seize on them with a greater ease and make them flow towards its eternal Lover and Master. Love and adoration of the

Supreme, the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful, becomes, under the direct influence of the psychic, a flaming, absorbing passion, a passion like that of a Chaitanya or a Mirabai, which devours all egoistic ties and attachments. "This approach through adoration can get its full power and impetus only when the mind goes beyond impersonality to the awareness of a supreme Personal Being: then all becomes intense, vivid, concrete; the heart's emotion, feeling, spiritualised sense reach their absolute; an entire self-giving becomes possible, imperative."¹ The sâdhaka comes more and more to be conscious of his soul and its will, and seeks to follow it in his life. His emotional being develops into a lover of God and a lover of men and all creatures, and a spiritual peace and purity and bliss flood his whole nature. He becomes a *bhakta*, a saint.

But the mind and the heart are not the whole of man, there is his life with its desires and its will to possess and enjoy all that it finds attractive in the world. It has an infinite hunger raging interminably in its finite, limited form. When the vital will feels the pressure of the psychic upon it and undergoes its purifying influence, it turns to the Divine and learns to surrender to Him with an enthusiasm all its own, an enthusiasm and fervour which no other part of our being can show in an equal measure. The surrender of the personal will to the Truth-Will of the Divine eliminates the insistent.

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

self-assertion of the ego, and considerably helps the widening of the consciousness.

“A combination of all these three approaches, the approach of the mind, the approach of the will, the approach of the heart, creates a spiritual or psychic condition of the surface being and nature in which there is a larger and more complex openness to the psychic light within us and to the spiritual Self or the Ishwara, to the Reality now felt above and enveloping and penetrating us. In the nature there is a more powerful and many-sided change, a spiritual building and self-creation, the appearance of a composite perfection of the saint, the selfless worker and the man of spiritual knowledge.”¹

In proportion as the sâdhaka learns to live in his depths and offer all his nature to the direct influence of his emergent soul, there begins a series of transmuting experiences in him. The psychic being comes forward as the unveiled guide and ruler of the nature. “A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realisation: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity,

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light".¹...And there begins also "a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine *śakti*, experience of cosmic consciousness, a direct touch with cosmic forces and with the occult movements of universal Nature, a psychic sympathy and unity and inner communication and interchanges of all kinds with other beings and with Nature, illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illumination of the sense and the body by higher experience, illumination of dynamic action in the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the will and the conduct."² All parts of the nature are lit up and quickened and transfigured by the presence and influence of the psychic. The mind develops an immediate vision and sense of the Truth, the heart the spiritual fire and rhythm in its feelings and emotions and a widening embrace of the world, and the will a one-pointed concentration in its aspiration to surrender and serve. The whole being tends to become a living altar of the Divine.

But though all this change and transformation may

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

appear to most sâdhaks of the traditional yogas as superlative and definitive,—indeed, few of them can conceive of a higher state—they are only the first decisive steps in the Integral Yoga. The psychic transformation, even at its highest, is only a psychicisation of the inferior instrumentation of the nature; it is not a radical transformation of its basic elements, nor a victorious transcendence of its inherent limitations. It is a “reflected and modified manifestation of things whose full reality, intensity, largeness, oneness and diversity of truth and power and delight are above us, above mind and therefore above any perfection, within mind’s own formula, of the foundations or superstructure of our present nature.”¹

The second step has, therefore, to be taken in the direction of the higher spiritual ranges of the mind and beyond. “A higher spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change; the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence.”² The opening within has to be supplemented by an opening above. The consciousness of the sâdhaka has to ascend above the human mind into the Higher mind, the Illumined mind, the plane of Intuition and the Overmind, and receive from them the transmuting light and force peculiar to them. This ascent may not take place if he

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

remains satisfied with the experiences of the Spirit in the terms of his human mind; it is only if the psychic being in him is fully awakened and aspires for the realisation of the supramental existence, the divine Reality above the ranges of the mind, that the lid of the mind is broken and his consciousness wings up into the thrilled infinitudes of the Spirit or commands a vision of the infinity above him—"an eternal Presence or an infinite Existence, an infinity of consciousness, an infinity of bliss,—a boundless Self, a boundless Light, a boundless Power, a boundless Ecstasy."¹ "The experience is in accord with that which is brought to us by the first opening of vision: the mind rises into the higher plane of pure self, silent, tranquil, illimitable; or it rises into regions of light or of felicity, or into planes where it feels an infinite Power or a divine Presence or experiences the contact of a divine Love or Beauty or the atmosphere of a wider and greater and luminous Knowledge."² In the beginning, when the mind comes down from these shining altitudes of experience, it finds that it has brought back with it nothing better than a blurred impression, or that it has lost much of what it saw or felt above. But gradually it learns to retain much of its higher realisations, and make the whole nature profit by them. These ascents of the consciousness take place usually in trance, but are "perfectly possible in a concentration of the waking

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo,

² *ibid.*

consciousness or, where that consciousness has become sufficiently psychic, at any unconcentrated moment by an upward attraction or affinity."¹ Consequent upon the ascents, the descents of light and power and peace become more frequent and expansively effective, and they change and illumine the very texture of the human consciousness and knowledge. "A light and power, a knowledge and force are felt which first take possession of the mind and remould it, afterwards of the life part and remould that, finally of the little physical consciousness and leave it no longer little but wide and plastic and even infinite. For this new consciousness has itself the nature of infinity: it brings to us the abiding spiritual sense and awareness of the infinite and eternal with a great largeness of the nature and a breaking down of its limitations; immortality becomes no longer a belief or an experience but a normal self-awareness; the close presence of the Divine Being, his rule of the world and our self and natural members, his force working in us and everywhere, the peace of the infinite, the joy of the infinite are now concrete and constant in the being; in all sights and forms one sees the Eternal, the Reality, in all sounds one hears it, in all touches feels it; there is nothing else but its forms and personalities and manifestations; the joy or adoration of the heart, the embrace of all existence, the unity of the Spirit are abiding realities. The consciousness of the mental creature is turning or has been already

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

turned wholly into the consciousness of the spiritual being. This is the second of the three transformations; uniting the manifested existence with what is above it, it is the middle step of the three, the decisive transition of the spiritually evolving nature.”¹

But even the spiritual transformation with its immense achievements—the universalisation of the human consciousness, the widening and illumination of human nature, the bridging up of the chasm between the human mind and the higher realms of the Spirit, the direct and dynamic contact with the cosmic forces, the union and communion with the cosmic Divine—cannot transform the whole human nature into the Supernature. To the mind that considers spiritual values and realisations in the gross, and possesses no insight into their depths and degrees, the achievements of the spiritual transformation may appear as exceptionally high and rare. But they are inadequate to the fulfilment of the ideal Sri Aurobindo has placed before us. Human nature is a complex manifold, shot through with the threads of the ego, and the light and power of the higher planes that come down to illumine and transform it cannot completely prevail against its tangled impurities. The first and most important reason of it is, that the light and power that descend cannot act in their native purity and force—their action is interfered with, obscured, diminished and diluted by the lower energies of human nature. The

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

second reason is, that the powers of the higher ranges of the spiritual mind, were it even possible for them to work here in their own purity and force, could not achieve a radical conversion of human nature, for, they are not the supreme creative powers of the Spirit. It is only the supreme creative Light-Force, the *cit-tapas* of the Supermind or *vijñāna*, that can act here in its full power, without suffering any diminution or dilution, and effect a radical and integral conversion and transformation. The Creator alone can refashion, remould and transmute into its own substance and force what it has created. The descent of the Supramental Truth-Force is, therefore, indispensable for the supramental transformation. But the Supermind is not only above, exerting from there its transforming pressure upon the evolving earth-nature, or descending into it to accelerate and accomplish the work; it is, like all other cardinal principles of existence, also involved here below, and pressing upwards from its unlit depths for evolution, for a complete and controlling emergence. The meeting of the two is the decisive point of the supreme fruition. The supramental Light-Force can alone handle each element of human nature with a masterful finality. The utmost that the spiritual transformation can do is the universalisation of the conscious being of man, but it cannot transform the Inconscience, which still remains as the base of his existence. It can vouchsafe frequent glimpses of the Transcendent, or even contact and communion with It, but it cannot "dynamise the Transcendence" in this world, that is to say, it cannot

bring down the omnipotent Consciousness-Force of the Transcendent and make it directly operative in this field of ignorance and inconscience.¹ But the supramental Will is the authentic Will of the Supreme, and its Force carries in it the fiat and fire of the Absolute. It commands an infinite power of free self-determination. It knows the precise hour and the precise way of dealing with each element of our nature; and its touch is infallibly transforming. It descends into the human mind and widens it into infinity, filling it with its own all-revealing illumination; it descends into the heart and floods it with its own termless bliss and love and sweetness; it descends into life and its energies and informs them with its own all-achieving force. Its powers, unlike those of the spiritual mind-ranges, suffer no clouding or dilution by their contact with the elements of the earthly nature—they work in their own right and in the divine fullness of their potencies. One comes to perceive, as one advances in the Yoga of the supramental transformation, that the members of one's being, now that they are already purified and illumined, respond with a joyous spontaneity to the action of the Supermind upon them. They seem, as it were, to recognise their Creator, and readily submit to its benignly transforming force. The supramental Light-Force descends into the subconscious and

¹ "So long as there is not the supramental change down to the subconscious, complete and full, the lower nature has always a hold on some part of the being". *The Life Divine*.

inconscient ranges of our being and fills them with its electric energies and irradiates their immemorial gloom.

The transforming action of the Supermind is characterised by a certain sovereign effectivity and a natural radicality impossible to any other spiritual power. If it sometimes halts in its working or retraces its steps, it is because it has chosen to allow the parts of human nature time and some amount of latitude to adjust themselves to the high-pitched demands of the transformation. It does often force the pace and quicken the momentum of the change, but never at the cost of repression or mutilation of any part—it knows the magic of conversion and transmutation without compulsion. If its action seems to be at times exacting or compelling, it is because it proceeds in the light of a knowledge, which knows exactly when a part is ripe for transformation, and acts with the consent of the *puruṣa* dwelling in that part. Its power and its unfailing effectivity derives from the fact of its dynamic unity and identity with our whole being, and even when it deals with details and infinitesimal parts, it never loses itself in them, but acts from a perfect knowledge of the organic unity of all being and its inner harmony with all universal existence.

The most outstanding feature of the action of the Supermind is its masterfully radical dealing with our physical nature. It will annul the sway of the Inconscience and the Ignorance under which our physical being labours at present, saturate the nerves, tissues and cells of our body with its own light, and quicken it with its

own force. Our body will cease to be the gross, inert, impeding clod that it now is, and become, instead, a vibrant dynamo of luminous energies, conscious of its oneness with universal Matter. Sri Aurobindo describes his own experience of transformation in the following poem:

TRANSFORMATION

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;
It fills my members with a might divine:
I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
Time is my drama or my pageant dream.
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.¹

The Supermind will consummate the work of the integration and harmonisation of our being begun by the psychic and developed by the spiritual transformation.

¹ *The Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo—Vol. II.*

The integration of the human personality seems to be one of the insistent aspirations of the progressive mind of modern humanity. What is usually meant by it is a sort of welding and harmonisation of the parts of being of which one is conscious. But such an integration, even if it succeed, will be a very imperfect one, inasmuch as it will leave out the far-flung obscure bases and the shining summits of our being, which are not normally accessible to human consciousness. We know only the active superficial parts of our being, which are but an outer fringe of our boundless existence. The ideal of integration, which is claiming our attention more and more, carries in it the promise of an unprecedented fulfilment; but the present attempts that are being made to realise it are nothing better than a clumsy groping or an awkward assortment by the rational mind, which has neither any means of exploring the subconscious and the inconscient layers of our being, except by a haphazard analysis of the superficial traits and habits of the nature, nor of scaling the limitless ranges of the Superconscient. There are two essential prerequisites of the integration of the human personality: one, the discovery and realisation of the soul or the living centre of the human being, and, second, an exploration and conquest of the totality of the being including the superconscient and the inconscient. Our finite being is centred in the Infinite, and our mortality is a passing wave of the Eternal. It is, therefore, idle to talk of the integration of its members without linking them up with the Infinite and Eternal.

The Integral Yoga seeks to effect a perfect dynamic integration of our personality by restoring to us the whole of our lost opulent empire, *rājyam samṛddham*.

The supramental transformation will knit in a stable and dynamic harmony the individual, the universal and the transcendent. The individual will find his completeness and harmonious fulfilment in his active unity with the universal and the transcendent. And this completeness will not be a completeness only in the consciousness of the individual, but it will also be a creative completeness in the will and force of his being; for, they too will be united with the Will and Force of the Supreme, which expresses itself in cosmic terms even while it transcends them.... "The complete individual is the cosmic individual, since only when we have taken the universe into ourselves—and transcended it—can our individuality be complete."¹

The supramental transformation will admit us into a participation in the working of the Supernature or *Parā prakṛti*. The more we advance from the spiritual to the supramental transformation, the more shall we cease to be mere instruments of the divine Will and Force, and enter into a "growing conscious participation of the higher and more intimate kind" with it. This experience of conscious participation and collaboration will be an unflinching accompaniment of the later phases of the supramental transformation.

¹ *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo.

The three steps of the transformation, as described above, should not be considered as strictly successive; the spiritual transformation may begin before the psychic transformation has reached its culmination, or the supramental transformation may intervene in the midst of the spiritual transformation in order to accelerate its pace and shorten the long way. Human nature is bafflingly complex, and the Divine's dealing with it, as soon as it is surrendered to Him, is incalculable and unpredictable. Particularly, the supramental transformation, which is an exclusive operation of the Divine *Mahāśakti*, may often appear to our human consciousness as a whirlwind process, sweeping through the heights and bases, the deeps and shallows of our being, bursting open the sealed centres, releasing the hidden waters, illumining the recondite corners, and uniting and integrating all strands and elements and forces in a sovereign, dynamic harmony. The integral transformation is the indispensable foundation of the Life Divine, and the *sine qua non* of the manifestation of the Divine in the earth-consciousness.

CHAPTER XXX

THE INTEGRAL PERFECTION

“A DIVINE perfection of the human being is our aim.” It is not only the perfection of the soul—the soul is, indeed, eternally perfect in itself—but the harmonious perfection of the whole being, inner and outer, that is sought in the Integral Yoga. In the last chapter, we have traced the long, meandering course of the triple transformation. We can now say that the victorious consummation of that transformation is the perfection and fulfilment we aim at in this Yoga. “To be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect” is not an idle dream of the religious visionary, but the deepest, ineradicable urge of the human consciousness, and its most irrepressible aspiration; and the spiritual endeavour of man cannot cease till this integral perfection is attained and expressed in his life. Life is expression, and a complete perfection in expression is the ultimate object of human living. Any spiritual discipline that draws us away from this rightful expression of our evolving soul defeats the very purpose of the soul’s descent here, and disturbs the balance of individual and social economy. And since man is a complex being, multiple in his aspects and attributes, his perfection must needs be a manifold perfection, fully expressive of the infinite potentialities of his nature. His

spiritual, mental, emotional, volitional and physical parts must all attain to their utmost perfection, if they are meant to be instruments of the divine manifestation in the material world.

Perfection really means a growth into the nature of the Divine Being. It is to be one with the Divine in His divine Nature, *sārūpya* or *sādharmya*. Oneness in consciousness with the Divine, *sāyujya*, or closeness to the divine Presence, *sāmīpya*, has always been the usual object of spiritual seeking; but oneness in nature, the assumption of the dynamic divine nature, *Parā-prakṛti*, is an achievement rarely aspired for, and never yet fully realised. And if some such perfection has been at all aimed at, it was confined to the mind, the heart and the vital being; the body's divine potentialities were not fully explored, the traditional contempt for its grossness and inertia standing in the way of such an exploration. In the Integral Yoga the body is considered as important as any other instrument, and its divine perfection is sought with a most thorough and scrupulous care. A divine being in a divine body is the formula of perfection in the Integral Yoga.

There are four prerequisites for the work of perfection: *śakti*, *vīrya*, *daivī prakṛti* and *śraddhā*. *Śakti* means the fully developed powers of the members of the instrumental nature; *vīrya*, the perfected dynamis of the soul-nature; *daivī prakṛti*, the assumption of these powers into the working of the divine Power; and *śraddhā*, a perfect faith in all the parts of our being to invoke and

sustain the action of the divine Power. A fundamental active equality supporting the play of the gnosis or the supramental Light-Force in the human nature is the best condition for the divine perfection we seek. "The gnosis once effectively called into action will progressively take up all the terms of intelligence, will, sense-mind, heart, the vital and sensational being, and translate them by a luminous and harmonising conversion into a unity of the truth, power and delight of a divine existence. It will lift into that light and force and convert into their own highest sense our whole intellectual, volitional, dynamic, ethical, aesthetic, sensational, vital and physical being."¹

THE HEIGHTENING OF THE CAPACITIES OF THE INSTRUMENTS

Let us take the body first. We do not know, we do not even care to inquire, what incalculable powers slumber in the depths of our physical being, and what potentialities are involved in its relation with the subtle and the causal body. All spiritual experience testifies to the existence of a subtle body behind our gross physical frame, and a causal body behind the subtle. This causal body is made of the very substance of light and bliss, and contains all the principles of perfection which our earthly body is destined to embody and express. Our mortal form is

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

not cut off from its causal prototype; it is, on the contrary, intimately connected with it; and if the centres that link our gross body with the subtle and the causal could be opened up, there would be no end to the perfection of the physical body—the infinite potentialities of the *kāraṇa* or causal sheath would be automatically actualised in the gross. Hathayoga, Rājayoga, Tantra etc. opened up some of these centres, but the highest ones still remained sealed, and the supreme principles of a dynamic divine perfection could not be brought down and established here in Matter for a general realisation in humanity. All that could be achieved, all that was intended to be achieved, was the realisation of some of the marvellous possibilities of the subtle physical in the gross body; and the ultimate aim of these yogas being the renunciation of the material life, no further perfection of the body was thought either necessary or possible. But the Integral Yoga makes the bringing down of these dynamic principles of perfection its chief objective. The opening up of the gnostic sheath, the *viññānamaya koṣa*, in us, and the canalising of its powers and potentialities into the gross body is the secret of the physical perfection promised by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Gnosis or *viññāna* spontaneously opens into the Bliss-Self or the *ānandamaya puruṣa*. The Bliss of the Divine has a dual aspect in regard to the worlds and beings it creates—it is at once Love and Beauty, upheld by delight and instinct with Power. When we awake in the Bliss-sheath and its powers of transfiguring

love and creative harmony descend into our whole being, it will be the bursting out of the splendour of a divine spring, a carnival of apocalyptic revelation. *Ananda* is the supreme creative Force, and its direct and unhindered action in the human nature is the guarantee of the highest divine perfection.

The preliminary fourfold perfection of the body is the development of the qualities of *mahattwa*, *bala*, *laghutā* and *dhāraṇa-sāmarthya*. This development will make the body an apt instrument of the Spirit. *Mahattwa* is "the presence of a greatness of sustaining force"; *bala* is "an abounding strength, energy and puissance of outgoing and managing force"; *laghutā*, "a lightness, swiftness and adaptability of the nervous and physical being"; and *dhāraṇa-sāmarthya*, "a holding and responsive power in the whole physical machine and its driving springs." The body will be filled with the majesty and might of the spiritual force, which is the conscious transcendental and universal *śakti*, accomplishing Her Will and Purpose in the individual frame by a perennial supply of strength and executive energy. The body will shed all its impeding heaviness and sloth and slowness of movement, and become wonderfully light and agile and readily responsive and adaptable in its cells and nerves and tissues to all the demands of Spirit. It will develop an unlimited capacity to hold without spilling all the torrents of power and energy that will pour into it from above, and respond with a glad freedom and flexibility to the impulsion of the divine Will in it.

There are many other possible achievements of the body which the human mind in its inveterate bondage to the so-called laws of Nature is hardly capable of considering as within the province of concrete reality. There is a tradition of spiritual culture that testifies to the development of the subtle senses and the assumption of an ethereal body, supple and radiant, by the initiates of some special types of yoga. But what distinguishes the Integral Yoga from the other yogas in its ideal of the physical perfection is its absolute insistence on the invulnerability of the gross physical body to all attacks of the forces of disruption and disintegration in the material world. It is not any kind of dematerialisation that is held up as the ideal, or the assumption of a bright, etheric body, but the divinisation of the physical body itself in all its cells and nerves and constituting elements and energies. It is rendering the body immune to decay and death and perfectly plastic to the touch of the Spirit—a conscious vessel of the self-manifesting Truth-Light.

The fourfold perfection of the *prāṇa* or the vital being will be *pūrṇatā*, *prasannatā*, *amatā* and *bhogasāmarthya*. *Pūrṇatā* is fullness. The *prāṇa* must be full of strength and agility and a tireless drive of radiant energies. It is for the fullness and brimming wealth of the vital that the Vedic Rishis invoked the aid of the Aswins, “the twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and enjoyment.” The sacrifice of *aśwamedha*¹ was also a

¹ The horse is a symbol of the life-energy.

symbolic offering of the life-energy to the Divine, so that He could pour His riches into it and perfect it for the fulfilment of His Will in the world. A full *prāṇa* is the most important condition for divine action and manifestation. Nothing great can be achieved in life except by the force and fervour of *prāṇa*. *Prasannatā* is a crystal purity and gladness. The *prāṇa* must not be a restless, passionate force, spilling or frittering itself on unworthy pursuits, or discouraged and depressed by any ascetic severity. It must be full of joy and buoyancy, and a profound, inviolable placidity. *Samatā* is equality. The *prāṇa* must not be swayed by the fickle likes and dislikes of the surface nature, but remain serene and unperturbed in the face of all experiences. Freedom from all desire is the surest means of establishing *samatā* in the *prāṇa*. An equal *prāṇa* will accept whatever comes to it from the Divine, without any of the disturbing reactions that accompany the normal vital movements of desires and preferences. And it must develop the power of an illimitable possession and enjoyment, *sarvabhogasāmarthya*, which is, indeed, its main function. The *prāṇa* is not meant to be a "slain or mortified thing, dull in its receptive power, dreary, suppressed, maimed, inert or null. It must have a full power of possession, a glad power of enjoyment, an exultant power of pure and divine passion and rapture." It must feel a spiritual rapture in all the movements of the nature and all the experiences, relations and contacts of its existence.

The fourfold perfection of the heart is *saumyatwa*,

tejas, *kalyān-śraddhā* and *prema-sāmarthya*. *Saumyatwa* is a large and limpid sweetness, a beaming and benign gentleness, and a winning grace and lovable candour. A smiling heart of illimitable love and tenderness and sweetness is a fit temple for *Mahālakṣmī*, as we have already seen. But there must not go with this sweetness and grace any emotional weakness or limpness, any flaccid or florid sentimentality. There must be an abounding Rudra-power in the heart, a high strength and force "capable of supporting without shrinking an insistent, an outwardly austere, or even where need is, a violent action." This is *tejas*. It is the flaming force of *īśān* or *Mahākālī* that strikes out of love and compassion, and beats into suppleness and symmetry the elements of nature that rebel against the action of Light. But both *saumyatwa* and *tejas* must be broad-based on an un-trembling equality of the soul. *Kalyān-śraddhā* is "a faith in the heart, a belief in and will to the universal good, an openness to the universal ananda." This faith and will must be founded upon the inner perception that the Divine is everywhere, not only in passive immanence, but as an active, all-ordaining and all-achieving Presence, as a supreme, unfailing, guiding Power. All processes of the yoga, all experiences, inner and outer, all contacts and dealings of the world must be viewed in the light of the truth that the Divine is the sole omnipotent Master of the whole universe, and that nothing can happen, within us and without, without His Will and sanction. One has to see even in the worst of calamities and dangers

the sustaining and succouring hand of the Supreme, and His dispensation of infinite love and compassion. Grief, suffering, disgrace, defeat—everything is so decreed and so arranged by the divine Love that it cannot but conduce to the spiritual progress of the *sâdhaka*, if he can remain unwavering in this *kalyāna-śraddhā*. *Prema-sāmarthya* is a limitless capacity for love. The main function of the heart being love, it is through the heart alone that we can enter into a dynamic oneness with the Divine and with all beings. This capacity for love has to be developed to such an extent that nothing in the world and beyond the world would remain outside its embrace. The Divine has to be loved in Himself and in all His myriad forms and representations, irrespective of their phenomenal differences. Friend and foe, saint and sinner, the high and the low, the ugly and the beautiful—all have to be loved as oneself, as selves of the one Self, as the many self-figurations of the eternal Identical. This is the highest perfection of the heart of the human being before it is supramentalised, this unlimited capacity for widest and closest and most intense, rapturous love.

The fourfold perfection of the *buddhi* is *viśuddhi*, *prakāś vicitrabodha*, and *sarva-jñāna-sāmarthya*. The intelligence must become pure and wide and crystal-clear. It must be washed clean of all prānic desire mixing with its search for truth. It must remain constantly open to Truth, and nothing but Truth, undeflected by the insinuations of the vital. It must likewise be kept absolutely free from the riot of the emotions, which distort, falsify

and darken Truth. It must also be liberated from its own defects, "inertia of the thought-power, obstructive narrowness and unwillingness to open to knowledge, intellectual unscrupulousness in thinking, prepossession and preference, self-will in the reason and false determinations of the will to knowledge."¹ "Its sole will must be to make itself an unsullied mirror of the truth, its essence and its forms and measures and relations; a clear mirror, a just measure, a fine and subtle instrument of harmony, an integral intelligence."² If it becomes calm and vast and clear, it will be able to reflect the higher light without deflecting or distorting it. It will then become "a serene thing of light, a pure and strong radiance emanating from the sun of Truth." "But, again, it must become not merely a thing of concentrated dry or white light, but capable of all variety of understanding (*vicitra-bodha*), supple, rich, flexible, brilliant with all the flame and various with all the colours of the manifestation of the Truth, open to all its forms."³ This is *vicitra-bodha*—a various and many-sided capacity of the *buddhi*. *Sarva-jñāna-sāmarthya* is the comprehensive, manifold capacity for acquiring and assimilating all forms of knowledge, unobstructed by any habitual or normal bias. A wide catholicity and coordinating power of the intelligence will abolish the narrow moulds and rigid formulas, which stand in the way

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

of the expansion of our mental horizons and hold us captives of our own limited thoughts. The *buddhi* must become large and luminous, and freely open to all revelations, intuitions and inspirations that stream down from the heights of Spirit.

The perfection described above is the preliminary perfection of the instruments, which has to be linked to the manifest power of the soul and lit up and exalted by it. The soul-force, pouring into the instruments, will raise the perfection from the normal levels of the nature to the spiritual, and galvanise it with its native dynamis. All the powers of the instruments will undergo a soul-change, and develop towards universality and impersonality. They will no longer remain and function as mind-powers, life-powers and powers of the physical constitution of the individual, but work as overt powers of the liberated soul, instinct with its fire and revealing its pure light and bliss.

The final perfection will come when the Divine and His *śakti* will be revealed behind the action of the soul-force and raise all the working of the instruments into the fullness and glory of the supramental Power. Earth has not seen, man has not yet conceived of this supramental perfection—it is unimaginably vast and glorious, it is the infinite perfection of the Divine Himself. All parts of the *sâdhaka's* nature with all their functioning will be taken up by the Supreme and His *śakti*. There are three stages of this perfection, at the last of which, when our union with Him is integral, the Divine manifests Himself in all our being and action. "He is felt in us as the possessor

of our being and above us as the ruler of all its workings and they become to us nothing but a manifestation of Him in the existence of the Jiva. All our consciousness is His consciousness, all our knowledge is His knowledge, all our thought is His thought, all our will is His Will, all our feeling is His Ananda and form of His delight in being, all our action is His action. The distinction between the Shakti and the Ishwara begins to disappear; there is only the conscious activity in us of the Divine with the great self of the Divine behind and around and possessing it; all the world and nature is seen to be only that, but here it has become fully conscious, the Maya of the ego removed, and the Jiva is there only as an eternal portion of His being, *amśa sanātana*, put forth to support a divine individualisation and living now fulfilled in the complete presence and power of the Divine, the complete joy of the Spirit manifested in the being. This is the highest realisation of the perfection and delight of the active oneness; for beyond it there could only be the consciousness of the Avatāra, the Ishwara Himself assuming a human name and form for action in the Lila.”¹

Before we conclude this chapter, let us attempt a brief outline of the supramental perfection as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The first characteristic of this perfection will be its transcendence of all human achievements, and a secure sovereignty over Nature; the second, its harmonious comprehensiveness, its inviolable integrality; and the third, its all-accomplishing divinity.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

The *buddhi* in its supramental perfection will not only be wide and luminous and capable of all knowledge, but it will undergo a radical conversion in the very way and method of its operation. Its truth will be the direct Truth-idea, and not a symbol or representation of truth as seen in the rushlight of the human mind. It will realise Truth and its various forms by an inmost revealing identity with them. The gnostic intuition, inspiration, discrimination and revelation are the fourfold process of the perfected thought called respectively *Saramā*, *Saraswatī*, *Dakṣiṇā* and *Ilā* by the Vedic Rishis. "The range of knowledge covered by the supramental thought, experience and vision will be commensurate with all that is open to the human consciousness, not only on the earth but on all planes."¹ The supramental thought will embrace from a dominating altitude of consciousness the entire stream of Time, past, present and future. Its vision will be what was known to the ancient mystics as *trikāladṛṣṭi*.² All its operations will proceed on the basis of unity and harmony. It will take all the incalculable multiplicities of existence in its sweep, but never lose for a moment the perception of their essential oneness. Its knowledge will be a comprehensive knowledge, which sees every object as an aspect and attribute of the indivisible One. It will regard not only the essential unity but also the developing diversities of that unity in a single, immediate vision and

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² Simultaneous vision of the three aspects of Time—past, present and future.

experience. The supramental will in the sâdhaka will be the Will of the Supreme, unified and irresistible, fulfilling itself through whatever conditions it has itself decreed. There will be no hesitations, no falterings, none of the confusions and conflicts that beset our human will, and no paralysing weakness in the face of resistance or opposition. The supramental will will be like a flame-shaft of the gnostic Force shooting straight at its target. The supramental feelings and emotions will be currents and waves and ripples of the unebbing divine love and delight; and even in their most intense and impetuous movements, they will preserve their inherent rhythm and play in perfect tune with all the movements of the nature. They will impart a throb and a thrill to the light of knowledge and the force of the will. The supramental perfection of the senses will be a seeing and hearing and touching of the Divine everywhere and in all beings and objects. Our senses are the external material means of contacting the objects of the world, but, as yogic experience shows, they are not indispensable; our mind can see and hear and touch the objects even without the help of the outer senses. It is for this reason that the mind is called the sixth sense—it is, in fact, the only sense in the present economy of our nature, and the outer senses are only its instruments and conveniences. It can contact the objects without using the senses as the media, and it can also contact and know the inner relations, forces and vibrations of the objects, which are not at all accessible to the outer senses. It is only habit that has made the mind dependent upon

the physical senses and circumscribed by their natural limitations. But the mind also, as a higher yogic experience reveals, is not the supreme and original sense; it too is an instrument and a habitual convenience. The real and original sense is beyond the mind, which it uses as a medium; it is "a direct and original activity of the infinite power" of the spiritual consciousness. "The pure action of sense is a spiritual action and pure sense itself is a power of the Spirit."¹ This pure and original sense is called *sanjñāna*. *Sanjñāna* makes us see, hear, touch, smell and taste the Divine Being, *saccidānanda*, as concretely as we sense the material objects. Its action is direct, immediate and intimate. It makes us contact the substance of the divine Existence, the substance of the divine Consciousness, the substance of the divine Force, and the substance of the divine Delight. "The supermind acting through sense feels all as God and in God, all as the manifest touch, sight, hearing, taste, perfume, all the felt, seen, directly experienced substance and power and energy and movement, play, penetration, vibration, form, nearness, pressure, substantial interchange of the Infinite."² The supramental sense sees no object as an isolated unit, cut off from others; it sees the All, the One, in all objects—it embraces the Infinite in each finite thing. It can know all things by a direct sensation, all things in this or any other world; and its

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

sensation is a luminous, revealing sensation of the essential being and the phenomenal becoming of the Divine. It makes us drink the soma of the divine bliss, which is the eternal sap of everything in the universe.

The *sanjñān* acts not only in itself, but it profoundly changes even the physical senses. "As soon as the sight, for example, becomes altered under the influence of the supramental seeing, the eye gets a new and transfigured vision of things and of the world around us....It is as if the eye of the poet and artist had replaced the vague or trivial unseeing normal vision, but singularly spiritualised and glorified,—as if indeed it were the sight of the supreme divine Poet and Artist in which we were participating and there were given to us the full seeing of his truth and intention in his design of the universe and of each thing in the universe. There is an unlimited intensity which makes all that is seen a revelation of the glory of quality and idea and form and colour. The physical eye seems then to carry in itself a spirit and a consciousness which sees not only the physical aspect of the object but the soul of quality in it, the vibration of energy, the light and force and spiritual substance of which it is made. Thus there comes through the physical sense to the total sense consciousness within and behind the vision a revelation of the soul of the thing seen and of the universal spirit that is expressing itself in this objective form of its conscious being."¹ It is, in short, an infusion of the supramental sense, the

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

sanjñāna, into the physical sense, resulting in the latter's total transformation and perfection.

The opening of the *vijñāna* and the *ānanda* sheath in us will make for a complete transfiguration of the substance of the body. It will bring about, in effect, a transubstantiation, a radical conversion of the very stuff and texture of the physical organism. The atoms that go to the making of the body will become conscious and radiant particles of matter, centres of a luminous force expressing itself in the scheme of material existence. And this direct working of the Truth-Force will eliminate from the body all causes of decay and wasting away, and establish in it a serene stability of health and power. "The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind as supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity."¹ There may even take place many unforeseen fundamental changes in the structure and functioning of the organs themselves as a result of the unfettered action of the supreme Will-Force in the human body, and a falling into disuse of some of the physiological processes which, however indispensable they may appear

¹ *The Supramental Manifestation* by Sri Aurobindo.

today, will have outlived their utility and been replaced by those of a far greater, because supramental, effectivity. The body, filled with the gnostic light and the gnostic force, *vijñāna-jyoti* and *vijñāna-śakti*, its cells illumined and electrified, and its consciousness fully developed to respond even to the least call of Spirit, may acquire "new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess and disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognisance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame."¹ But all these powers and perfections of the body, let me repeat, will be a supramental evolution from within it, a manifold flowering of its divine possibilities, and not an imposition of the potencies of the etheric body or intermittent fireworks of the prānic energies. The body will develop its spiritual powers by the opening up of the gnostic and bliss sheaths and its transfiguration into their luminous substance.

Radiant with a creative consciousness, vibrant with an inexhaustible force, poised in a fathomless peace, and

¹ *The Supramental Manifestation* by Sri Aurobindo.

steeped in happiness and harmony, the supramentalised body will reveal the beauty and glory of the Divine in the material world, wiping away its immemorial stigma of grossness. For many a long century, the body has been a pathetic object of the yogi's contempt, spurned as the greatest obstacle to the freedom and progress of his soul. Its supramental perfection will negative that contempt, and prove that it has been made of the same substance as Spirit (*sat*) and meant to serve here as a transparent form of the Formless.

CHAPTER XXXI

"THE HOUR OF GOD"

THE modern age is an age of singular paradoxes and unprecedented promises. On the one hand, man is ardently yearning for unity and harmony, and, on the other, he is frantically tearing himself and his society with divisions and discords. He is athirst for peace and the cessation of all that threatens the progressive tenor of his life, and yet he is driven to create and multiply a myriad causes of conflict, within him and without. He longs so much for a harmonious advance of the collectivity and a general well-being of his species, and yet he is so helplessly dominated by aggressive, individualistic tendencies and an exclusive self-assertion. It is an age of darkness pierced by stray shafts of an uncommon light, an age of colossal frustrations astir with exceptional promises and essential preparations. New hopes, lofty dreams, unforeseen visions are flashing out of the sombre gloom in which man is engulfed today. In the world of ideas, it is a veritable revolution he has achieved; and in the province of technology, a progress that defies comparison with the achievements of any other age in the accredited history of civilisation. In every sphere of life, one hears the clank of snapping chains, and the ringing cry for the inestimable blessings

of freedom—freedom of the individual, freedom of the nation, freedom of each society and institution, freedom of thought and speech and action,—in the teeth of pervasive totalitarian constraint and regimentation. Countering the fading influence of old-world distinctions, the gospel of equality has installed itself in the heart and mind of humanity with a firmness that augurs extremely well for the future of our life and culture. In every field of activity, one observes earnest and persistent attempts at self-adaptation, coordination and cooperation, both individual and collective, national and international, meeting with varying degrees of success, in spite of all possible opposition. The prodigious work of the U.N.O. is a typical reflection of the many promises, paradoxes, aspirations and anomalies that are locked in a desperate struggle behind the ambiguous front of the present world. What will surge out of this heaving welter? Where, in what distant country, lies the harbour of peace and harmony and creative light?

What do we see when we turn to the different branches of modern knowledge? It is the same spectacle of great promises gleaming out of profound paradoxes. In Philosophy, in spite of the verbal acrobatics of Logical Positivism, there is a deepening tendency towards the recovery of the ancient knowledge of the Orient and the Greeks, a synthesis of the essential elements of the philosophies of East and West, and even an intrepid envisaging of the dim heights of mysticism. This new trend is not so much visible in the veteran philosophers

as in the young ones who have been touched by the rays of the new Light. Religion is coming again to the forefront of human thought, and even theology is shedding off its habitual narrowness to embrace the wider horizons of human aspiration. Keyserling, Eddington, Einstein, Jung and P. Sorokin—all now meet on a common platform, not always easy to define yet perceptible on an intuitive approach, a platform of many-aspected idealism, heralding the advent of an age of higher values. Physics has developed a philosophy of its own, which tends to approximate to a metaphysic of material realities. The dividing lines between the different departments of knowledge are melting away into a universal feeling of family kinship and organic unity, in spite of the tough resistance of the dyed-in-the-wool materialists and rationalists.

But nowhere is the change more striking and pregnant with far-reaching possibilities than in the psychological researches of modern times. This is a very significant fact, pointing, as it does, a finger of light to what is preparing in the womb of the future. For, true philosophy, as the ancients knew it, is an outcome of spiritual and psychological experiences, and not a product of mere intellectual speculation. It is invariably preceded by an urge for an intensive psychological discipline and research. "The rapid and world-wide growth of a 'psychological' interest over the past two decades shows unmistakably that modern man has to some extent turned his attention from material things to his own subjective

processes," says Jung, adding that "...modern man, in contrast to his nineteenth century brother, turns his attention to the psychic with very great expectations; and... he does so without reference to any traditional creed, but rather in the Gnostic sense of religious experience....He wants to know—to experience for himself." This widespread interest in psychological and subjective phenomena is sure to yield a bountiful crop of psychological knowledge, and lead to spiritual experience. But the question is: on what lines of research should man proceed in order to reach his spiritual fulfilment? With his characteristic candour and straightforwardness, Jung confesses to an ignorance on the point: "I would rather emphasise what has already been said: that the newest developments of analytical psychology confront us with the imponderable elements of human personality; that we have learned to place in the foreground the personality of the doctor himself as a curative factor; and that we have begun to demand his transformation—the self-education of the educator....What was formerly a method of medical treatment now becomes a method of self-education, and therewith the horizon of modern psychology is immeasurably widened....We Occidentals had learned to tame and subject the psyche, but we know nothing about its methodical development and its functions. Our civilisation is still young, and we therefore required all the devices of the animal-tamer to make the defiant barbarian and the savage in us in some measure tractable. But when we reach a higher cultural level, we must forego compulsion and

turn to self-development. For this we must have knowledge of a way or a method—and so far we have known of none.”

It is here, in this predicament of psychology, which mirrors, in fact, the great cultural crisis of modern humanity, that the immemorial Yoga of India can render the greatest help and guidance. Jung himself is not unconscious of it, but, not having had any first-hand experience of the true yogic life, he seems to shy at some of its untoward pathological symptoms and unwilling to surrender his reason to a higher light. What he sadly lacks is a clear perception of the Superconscious, and its incalculable powers of creation and transformation. The way or the method he is groping after can only come as a result of a systematic exploration, not only of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious layers of our being, but also—and more—of the Superconscious. And yoga is precisely that method. Kenneth Walker, a clear-eyed thinker on the problems of human culture, believes that “because Western man has been so preoccupied with the outside world, it is to the East that we must turn to find the highest level that human thought has reached.” The problem of the illumination, transformation and integration of the human personality is the most urgent and vital problem of the present human culture. If the human personality cannot be reclaimed from its present state of mutinous animality and transformed into its divine counterpart, which lies latent in itself, then all its culture and civilisation are, indeed, doomed. How long can a

society last which is afflicted with all conceivable moral infirmities, and led by a blinded intellect into ever-multiplying falsehoods, iniquities and discords? It is a state that has reached the peak-point of its crisis, and stands dangerously poised between extinction and renovation. If no way is found to the rebirth and reconstruction of man, all the labours of countless ages, all the pride and glory of human dreams, all the boundless variety and magnificence of human achievements will be buried for ever beneath the smoking ruins of a misguided Science. Neither modern psychology, nor philosophy, nor the facile socio-economic nostrums of Communism or Democratic Socialism will have saved mankind from this total destruction.

There are some well-meaning thinkers who regard moral reformation or rearmament as the best remedy for the present state of affairs. They seem to be ignorant of the fact that only that morality which is derived from spiritual or religious life has an ennobling and elevating power; the morality that has no spiritual or religious basis, but is a hot-house product of the eclectic and utilitarian intellect, is powerless to control and purify the obscure and perverse energies of life, and either creates serious complexes and reactions in the human nature, or acts only as a pious mask covering many a festering sore. "It was when the Great Way declined that human kindness and morality arose" is the penetrating verdict of Lao Tzu, and Whitehead chimes with him when he says, "The insistence upon the rules of conduct marks the ebb

of religious fervour". He reminds us that St. Paul denounced the Law and Puritan divines, and contemptuously spoke of the rags of righteousness. Is it not time the ardent advocates of moral reform took this truth to heart and turned their benevolent energies to deeper and more fruitful channels?

There are many who look up to education to achieve the miracle of human transformation. But education can regenerate and transform only if it is based on a regenerative and transformative philosophy of life.¹ And to have a philosophy of life one must first have a goal of life. The average man has forgotten today that life has a goal other than the petty satisfaction of passing desires by the not always unquestionable use of money and power. He hardly feels the need of a higher philosophy than Dialectical Materialism, which flaunts before his wondering gaze the delusive promise of economic emancipation and social and political equality. What regenerative education can come out of such a sordid, slimy philosophy of life? Can it develop the divine qualities that lie latent in man? Has it ever produced a single specimen of a godly nature? Even the American ideal of education, which is almost universally acclaimed and adopted today, is severely condemned by its own results. What man hopes to make gods of his children so long as he burns incense at the

¹ "Philosophic thought in antiquity was the vital centre of liberal education as it has never been for the modern world."

—Thomas Whittaker

altars of Mammon and Material Efficiency? No doubt education is a great regenerative agent, but it must be an education that can educe what is high and noble, pure and luminous, infinite and immortal in man. It must be an education that can educe and reveal the Divine in man.

It is a radical change of consciousness, a psychological transformation, that alone can deliver man from his present darkness. And, as we have just seen, this transformation is far beyond the capacity, even beyond the conception, of any modern science or philosophy, ethics or psychology. It is not enough to know the superficial layers of man's being and consciousness; it is not enough to explore some parts of his Unconscious, individual or collective; it is not enough to hold up before him a bright ideal of moral life and altruistic activity. What is indispensable for the radical conversion and integration of his being is a systematic exploration of the Superconscious and an illumination and reconstruction of his conscious and unconscious parts by its purifying and transforming light. P. Sorokin hits the mark when he declares, "If the as yet largely unknown 'fission forces' of the superconscious are revealed and fully exploited, they can become the most decisive agency of man's self-control, as well as the control of others and of all the known and unknown forms of the inorganic, organic and conscious energies in man and the universe. Their neglect by sensate science has been one of the chief reasons for its failure.

"What is needed is a concentration of humanity's efforts on unlocking the secrets of the superconscious as the realm

of the most powerful, most creative and most ennobling forces in the entire universe. The more man becomes an instrument of the superconscious, the more creative, wiser and nobler he grows; the more easily he controls himself and his unconscious and egoistic conscious energies, the more he comes to resemble God as the supreme ideal. In the superconscious lies our main hope, the road to humanity's 'promised land' of peace, wisdom, beauty and goodness."

For reaching the Superconscient and canalising its light and force into human existence, there is no other means than Yoga.¹ But it must be a yoga that accepts the whole of life, looks upon it as the field for the progressive manifestation of the Transcendent, and knows the secret of bringing about its radical transformation by the highest Truth-Light of the dynamic Superconscient. The yogas that are wedded to the philosophy of *māyā*, or attached to an ascetic withdrawal from life, branding it as illusory or incorrigibly imperfect, cannot solve the present problems of human culture. For, the hour of world-negation is past, the ochre robe and the monastery have lost their old appeal, and the soul of man aspires today for a divine perfection and fulfilment *in life*. Awakening to its great mission and infinite possibilities, it seems contemptuous of the idea of a flight from the field of life, and pledged to

¹ "Contemplation survives only in the East and to learn it we have to turn to the East."

—A. Koestler

manifest the Divine here, in the material world, and turn all human existence into a vehicle of His transcendent splendours.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, as we have followed it in the preceding chapters, envisages as its aim such an all-round divinely pragmatic consummation—an integral perfection and fulfilment of man in God, and an unflawed manifestation of God in man. It promises to fulfil all the deep-seated aspirations of man by developing all his powers and faculties, visible and invisible, and raising him beyond his mental consciousness to the Truth-Consciousness of the Supermind. It does not ask him to renounce or unduly reduce the activities of his life, and forswear the salutary, secular aims of his existence. That way lies not victory but the defeat of life and the disintegration of the material basis of all spiritual conquests.¹ All that it asks him to do is to shift upward his central will of life and, discovering and realising the infinite and eternal Reality of his existence, shape his nature and life in Its image. It asks him to recover the Truth, the harmony, the beauty and bliss, the peace and power of God, and express them in his nature and in all its movements.

The Integral Yoga is neither Hindu nor Christian, neither Buddhist nor Moslem; nor is it an eclectic blend

¹ "The true message of the West has been misunderstood. That message is that a comprehension and subordination of the concrete are necessary for the ultimate security of the ideal life."

—Anandacoomaraswamy

of their essential elements. Standing above all doctrinal denominations and mind-made categories, it calls upon the soul of man to awake and assert its divinity and fulfil the purpose for which it has come down to earth—the manifestation of God in Matter. Its aim is the most comprehensive ever conceived by man, its appeal is at once intimate and universal, and its method—if method it can be called—an integral surrender to the Divine Shakti and Her Grace. It grips the thought, feeling and will of man and, forging them into an organic unity round the psychic or soul centre, lifts them all into the embrace of the Divine. It is a life-transforming yoga, purporting to fulfil the Time-Spirit by realising the ideal of human unity and the divine perfection of human life.

Mankind is passing through perhaps the greatest crisis of its cultural life. It is living in one of those epochs in which there takes place what the Gitâ calls "*dharma-syāglāni*", the decay and disintegration of the very upholding principle of existence, and a resurgence of the forces of darkness—one of those epochs in which the *avatāra* descends to deliver mankind from darkness and help it take a decisive step forward in its evolution. The soul of man, like the earth in winter, looks stripped and desolate. Distraught and unhappy with its mean material obsessions, prostrate in the dust in the very hour of its resounding scientific triumphs, drained of hope, drained of spiritual strength and courage, drained even of the will to rise up and advance, it turns an anguished, appealing eye to the Heavens above. Its hour of meek, prayerful prostration is the

hour of its spiritual salvation. Already there are invasions of Light, thrills of hope, spurts of quickening energies in its hidden depths; but it is not aware of them on its surface, and in the mass of mankind, the stricken collectivity. The Age of *kali* has been the nurse of the Age of *satya*, —a long, dark night preparing the glory of the coming dawn. It is passing now. The splendour of the spring will soon burst forth out of the pervading blight of winter. The hour of the defeat of man's ego is the hour of the Victory of God; for, the intense cry, the vibrant appeal that rises from the agony of a fall and an inner destitution cannot fail to bring down a deluge of God's all-achieving Grace.

Let us listen to what Sri Aurobindo says on the Hour of God:

THE HOUR OF GOD

“There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being; there are others when it retires and men are left to act in the strength or the weakness of their own egoism. The first are periods when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny; the second are spaces of time when much labour goes to the making of a little result. It is true that the latter may prepare the former, may be the little smoke of sacrifice going up to heaven which calls down the rain of God's bounty.

"Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.

"In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let wordly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear: for it is the hour of the unexpected."

God's hour is now, and His breath is abroad upon the waters of our being. In the calm solemnity of this blessed hour the Mother proclaims the advent of a New Age and the Victory of a new Light.¹

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—June. 9, 1914.

"....From this centre; this burning nucleus which is and will be more and more penetrated with Thy light and love, Thy forces will radiate over the whole earth, visibly and invisibly, in the hearts of men and in their thoughts.

"Such is the certitude Thou givest me in reply to my aspiration for Thee.

"An immense wave of love descends upon everything and penetrates all.

"Peace, peace, on all earth, victory, plenitude, marvel.

"O beloved children, sorrowful and ignorant, and thou, O rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, tranquillise your force, it is the omnipotence of Love that is coming to you, *it is the pure radiance of the light* that is penetrating you. This human, this earthly hour is the most beautiful among all hours. Let each, let all know it and enjoy the plenitude that is accorded.

"O saddened hearts and anxious foreheads, foolish obscurity and ignorant ill-will, let your anguish be calmed and effaced.

"This is the splendour of the new word that comes:

'I am here.'"



**The Integral
Yoga
of
Sri Aurobindo**

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UP State Museum, Lucknow

Rishabhchandra